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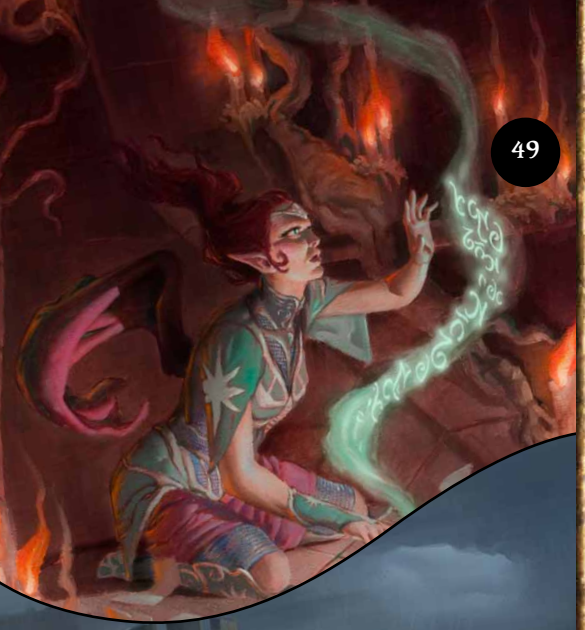

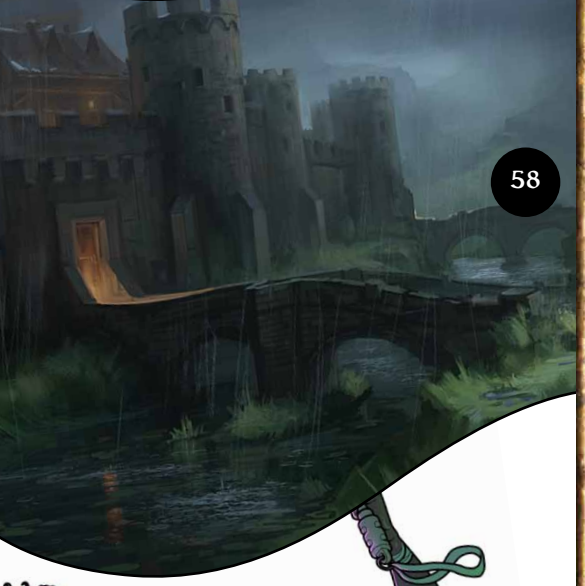

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The Future is Now

First and foremost, D&D has always been a game about people. Since the dawn of the Interwebs, the game has enjoyed a vocal, enthusiastic, opinionated, and sometimes boisterous group of fans willing to offer feedback on topics as wide-ranging as individual campaigns can be. From bulletin boards to blogs, we've come a long way as a D&D community.

Last week, Wizards of the Coast launched the latest online community offering so far. From straightforward message boards, which had largely been the community experience on our site, we now offer individual profile pages, wikis, blogs, and more. Chat is back (after not working for almost two years in the old system), and you can access a slew of options made popular on the most robust of social networking sites.

Yes, the feature set is not complete. Given more time, we know lots of little fixes or changes we would like to make. But we wanted our forums back online as quickly as possible, and we were immensely satisfied with the new system even if it does have room to grow.

If you haven't checked out the new community yet, you should. It really is something to see. Create a profile, check out the groups that are already there, and start thinking about how you can use this new system to improve your game. That's where we're headed, and we need your feedback and suggestions to make this the best community site that we can.

Some of the things we've been doing with the new site so far:

Building groups for our individual campaigns. You should check out Chris Perkins's public Io'mandra campaign page if you're looking for ideas to kick start your own campaign group. Upload your maps, fill up your calendar, invite your gaming group to join, and you're off! I've been using my own group's blog to post session synopses, and I'll be using the forums soon to discuss the PCs' goals and long-term aspirations as we close in on the paragon tier.

Getting feedback. I keep tabs on the new D&D Insider group on a daily basis. If you haven't already created a profile and you're a subscriber, you should come join up. We're a subscribers-only group, and we have plans in the works to take advantage of this group for community-focused news and announcements. We also plan to start highlighting community member profiles or groups that are particularly interesting or fun, and members of the D&D Insider group will certainly be frequent targets.

Getting feature requests. As I said, this new system isn't yet fully realized. (That's why we're calling it a beta release.) But we have so many plans for this new feature of the site -- well, you'll just have to keep checking back for updates. I'll be sure to make announcements on the D&D Insider group, and I know we'll do the same on the D&D group as we get more information from the community team.

What features would you like to see on the new Wizards Community? What do you miss from the old forums that might not be there? What would you like to be able to do with groups? What sort of information would you like to see posted on our official group pages? Send your feedback to dndinsider@wizards.com. As always, we'd love to hear from you!

Do you know what else we'd like? To be your friends! It's not as if we're competing to sign up more friends than everybody else, but this is the way for you to keep track of what we're up to. So send those friend requests to the D&D Insider team.

Debut Content
Player's Handbook 3

Skill Powers

Design by Mike Mearls and Robert J. Schwalb

Commentary by Mike Mearls, Peter Schaefer, and Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by Eric Belisle

Welcome to another installment of the *Player's Handbook* 3 debut series!

In previous months, you've seen the psion class and the githzerai race. This time, we explore a brand new concept for the game: the skill power.

Skill powers are utility powers that you qualify for not based on your class, but by virtue of your training in a particular skill. They're available to every character in the game, whether you're playing a fighter built using only the *Player's Handbook* or a genasi hybrid invoker/wizard using content from a wide range of resources.

Player's Handbook 3—and this article—includes powers for each and every skill in the game, from Acrobatics to Thievery. This debut content includes a selection of those powers (roughly half of the total appearing in the book), as well as the introductory section detailing how to use these powers in your game.

Tune in next month to check out the next part of the *Player's Handbook* 3 debut series, available only to D&D Insiders like you!

COMMENTARY

WHY SKILL POWERS

Mike Mearls: Skill powers came about as a way to give characters an additional way to specialize in a skill. The concept first came to me when I was playing a tiefling wizard with a 16 Charisma and training in Diplomacy and Bluff. It was fun serving as the party's spokesmen, but that didn't quite feel like enough. I wanted the option to do interesting things with my skills outside of the specific scenes and roleplaying moments that came up. A skill power is a way for a player to make a skill important in whatever situation he wants. If you want your high Diplomacy character to feel like a charismatic leader in battle, just pick out a combat-useful Diplomacy power. With a skill power, you extend a skill into whatever situation that power applies to.

Mike Mearls: You could argue that giving more options to boost a skill's bonus does the same thing. However, that method has two drawbacks. First, a skill isn't always useful in every situation. Second, that game breaks down if the gap between one character's checks and another's grows too large. We don't want the typical DCs to be impossible for one set of characters. Skill powers give the player a button to hit that will make a skill useful, regardless of the exact situation. They also let a PC express skill mastery in a way that doesn't lead to automatic success or DCs that no one else has any real chance of handling.

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SKILL POWERS

Mamindreth Starsong paused a moment as the Linked Portal ritual drew to an end. He had forgotten the powdered gatevine and couldn't remember the rest of the words. Of course, he couldn't stop now, so he scooped up some grass and dirt and intoned some mumbo jumbo, and the gate opened.

The ogre dealt Kraya a blow to the head that should have dropped her like a rag doll. She could barely see through the blood in her eyes but refused to fall. The dragonborn retaliated with a blast of icy breath and a charge, and then nearly collapsed from the pain.

Corrin brushed a hand past the duke's belt and stepped back. This act gave his companion the chance to run the man through while the duke was worrying about what had been stolen—which was nothing more than his attention.

A skill power is a utility power that represents a degree of skillfulness surpassing that conferred by normal training. Having a skill power is a sign of your mastery of that skill or a mark of your natural aptitude for it. You must be trained in a skill to gain and use its powers (see "Skill Training," *Player's Handbook*, page 178).

Gaining and Using a Skill Power

You can gain and use only the skill powers associated with your trained skills. Whenever you reach a level that grants you a utility power from your class, you can choose a skill power in place of a class power. The skill power you choose must be of the same level as or lower than the class power you would have gained.

COMMENTARY

VS. UTILITY POWERS

Robert J. Schwalb: Skill powers address a key customization concern, giving players additional mechanisms for individuating their characters from other characters filling the same class, race-class, or even role combination. Utility powers achieve this too, but they are confined to the story, tactical choices, and themes found within the particular class. Skill powers do this as well, but they have greater availability to a wider range of characters. Most important is that skill powers enable players to place greater emphasis on their skill choices and grant access to powers that reflect these choices. If you pick up Skill Training (Bluff) as a wizard, skill powers make this choice more meaningful beyond the +5 bonus the feat would ordinarily grant.

Peter Schaefer: Skill powers are designed to be of a power level with other utility powers without stepping on any class's toes. I think the perfect balance for them makes them desirable for certain classes but a touch underpowered for others. For example, a leader should be able to pick a class power better than *physician's care*, but any other class could use the healing.

BALANCE

Robert J. Schwalb: Since any character with training in the skill can select its skill powers, reinforcing character role was unnecessary. Once free from roles, it was just a matter of building extensions to how skills are already used, providing concrete ways characters could incorporate skills into encounters in interesting and evocative ways.

Peter Schaefer: Skill powers are power-neutral options. When you take one, you aren't gaining a particular advantage, so they don't need to cost a feat.

POWER LEVEL

Peter Schaefer: There aren't any level 22 skill powers because they never felt right. To build a power good enough to be level 22, it had to feel distinctly superhuman. It felt more natural to reserve those amazing feats for the classes than to tie it to a simple skill.

You can use retraining (*Player's Handbook*, page 28) to replace a class power with a skill power and vice versa, as long as the new power is of the same level as or lower than the replaced power.

You cannot replace a utility power from a paragon path or an epic destiny with a skill power.

Acrobatics

You can combine your speed and agility to cross treacherous terrain, keep your balance even in the most difficult situations, and maneuver past enemies. Acrobatics powers enhance your maneuverability, allowing you to catch your enemy by surprise or to evade attacks by tumbling to safety.

You must be trained in Acrobatics to gain and use Acrobatics powers.

Agile Recovery — **Acrobatics Utility 2**

With a quick leap, you are back on your feet and ready to act.

At-Will
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You stand up.

Dodge Step — **Acrobatics Utility 6**

Relying on superior balance and agility, you move in the blink of an eye.

Encounter
Immediate Reaction **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy ends its turn adjacent to you
Effect: You shift 1 square.

Rapid Escape — **Acrobatics Utility 10**

You suddenly slip from your enemy's grasp, leaving it briefly vulnerable to your attacks.

At-Will
Minor Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be grabbed.
Effect: You make an Acrobatics check to escape. If the check succeeds and a creature was grabbing you, the creature grants combat advantage to you until the end of your turn.

Arcana

Long hours of studying magic and its related fields have prepared you well for a life of adventure. Ignorance is doom in dangerous situations; the correct bit of knowledge at the right time can save lives and turn sure defeat into a close victory. Arcana powers allow you to exploit critical lore about your enemies so that you can meddle in their attacks or have an edge in a fight.

You must be trained in Arcana to gain and use Arcana powers.

Arcane Mutterings — **Arcana Utility 2**

You launch into a recitation of obscure lore on a subject to impress, cow, or trick your audience.

Encounter
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You would make a Bluff, a Diplomacy, or an Intimidate check
Effect: You make an Arcana check in place of the Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check.

COMMENTARY

ACROBATICS

Mike Mearls: The Acrobatics skill powers are a great way for us to create some basic, at-will expressions of great acrobatic talent without having to repeat ourselves across a number of different classes. That concept rests at the heart of the system's concept.

Insightful Warning — **Arcana Utility 6**

As your foe unleashes its attack, you realize that you have read about this sort of danger and shout a warning to your friends.

Encounter
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: A creature you can see makes an attack roll for an area or a close attack that includes you as a target
Effect: You and each ally included as a target of the triggering attack gain a +2 power bonus to all defenses against it.

Elemental Countermeasures — **Arcana Utility 16**

As magical energy streaks toward you, you use your knowledge of that magic to counter some of it.

Encounter
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You take acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage
Effect: You make an Arcana check. The damage is reduced by the check result divided by 2.

Athletics

Your physical strength helps you overcome many obstacles, whether by swimming across a roaring river, scrambling up a cliff, or smashing through a door. Athletics powers exploit your physical prowess to let you bull your way through any situation, relying on brawn to reach your enemies no matter how remote they might be.

You must be trained in Athletics to gain and use Athletics powers.

Bounding Leap — **Athletics Utility 2**

As you spring through the air, you tuck in your legs and arms, spinning to eke out a little extra distance.

Encounter
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You make an Athletics check to jump with a +5 power bonus. You are considered to have a running start, and the distance you jump can exceed your speed.

Scrambling Climb — **Athletics Utility 2**

You use your forward momentum to help pull yourself upward.

Encounter
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You make an Athletics check to climb with a +5 power bonus. If the check succeeds, you climb a number of squares equal to 2 + your speed.

Mighty Sprint — **Athletics Utility 6**

Your throw yourself forward at a breakneck pace, bounding over obstacles.

Encounter
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You move your speed + 4. During this movement, you ignore difficult terrain and gain a +5 power bonus to Athletics checks you make as part of the move.

Bluff

Lies have many shades, and your palette holds them all. As an accomplished liar, you make the implausible seem true and the impossible possible. Bluff powers give you new techniques for deceiving those around you. You can fill in gaps in conversation with whatever words roll off your tongue, deceive enemies to give your side an edge in battle, and talk your way out of sticky situations with a few quick words and an honest expression.

You must be trained in Bluff to gain and use Bluff powers.

COMMENTARY

BLUFF

Robert J. Schwalb: Bluff is all about deception, but deception can be many things, from assuming a disguise, lying, trickery, feinting, and so on. All this proved fertile ground for spinning out fun and effective powers for the skill.

Battle Feint — **Bluff Utility 2**

Your sudden move causes the enemy to flinch, setting up your ally's next attack.

Encounter
Minor Action **Melee 1**
Target: One creature
Effect: You make a Bluff check opposed by the target's passive Insight check. If the check succeeds, one ally adjacent to you gains combat advantage against the target for that ally's next attack against it before the end of your next turn.

Confusing Blather — **Bluff Utility 6**

You spew a stream of nonsense, leaving your enemies puzzled.

Encounter
Minor Action **Close** burst 1
Target: Each enemy in burst
Effect: You make a Bluff check opposed by each target's passive Insight check. If the check succeeds against a target, that target cannot make opportunity attacks against you until the end of your next turn.

Improvisational Arcana — **Bluff Utility 10**

As you perform a ritual, you intersperse made-up words and improvise components, using odds and ends at hand.

Daily
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You are performing a ritual of one-half your level or lower
Requirement: You must be trained in Bluff.
Effect: You expend only half of the ritual's gold piece component cost (any focus item must still meet the minimum cost), although you cannot use this power to reduce the component cost of the rituals Brew Potion and Enchant Magic Item. You can also make a Bluff check in place of any skill check the ritual requires.

Diplomacy

You have a way with people, possessing the right mix of empathy and charm. Those who meet you are inclined to befriend you, doing as you wish or helping you and your cause. Diplomacy powers broaden your options. You force enemies to think twice about attacking, bargain to your best advantage, or inspire your allies to great heroics.

You must be trained in Diplomacy to gain and use Diplomacy powers.

Soothing Words — **Diplomacy Utility 2**

The battle done, your allies turn to you for words of encouragement and support.

Daily
Standard Action **Close** burst 5
Requirement: You must be taking a short rest.
Target: Each ally in burst
Effect: When each target spends one or more healing surges at the end of the short rest, he or she regains additional hit points equal to your Charisma modifier.

Haggle — **Diplomacy Utility 6**

You are a practiced negotiator, sometimes able to turn a slip of the tongue to your advantage.

Encounter
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You make a Diplomacy check and dislike the result
Effect: You reroll the Diplomacy check and use either result.

Cry for Mercy — **Diplomacy Utility 10**

With pleading words and gestures, you discourage your enemies from striking down the wounded.

Encounter
Minor Action **Close** burst 5
Target: You or one ally in burst; the target must be bloodied
Effect: Until the end of your next turn or until the target is no longer bloodied, the target's movement does not provoke opportunity attacks, and the target gains a +4 power bonus to all defenses.

Commentary

DIPLOMACY

Mike Mearls: Skill powers make it easy to create powers aimed at skill challenges. In a lot of ways, the skill system is to skill challenges as powers are to combat encounters. If your skill choices are a big part of your character's identity, it's important that we have some skill power options to back that up.

DUNGEONEERING

Mike Mearls: While skill powers mostly stay within the bounds of non-magical abilities, in some cases we pushed into effects that border on the magical. The concept behind this power is simple: Someone who has spent a lot of time underground learns to use senses other than sight to make her way though a passage. It's a nice little boost for a scouting rogue.

Dungeoneering

Whether creeping through the Underdark or exploring dungeon depths, you possess exceptional skill in navigating the subterranean world. With Dungeoneering powers, you can react to underground dangers at a glance, retain your faculties when bereft of light, and uncover secrets about aberrant monsters.

You must be trained in Dungeoneering to gain and use Dungeoneering powers.

Otherworldly Lore — **Dungeoneering Utility 2**

Something about the aberrant horror's movements strikes a chord; you know just how to fight it.

Encounter
Minor Action **Close** burst 5
Target: One aberrant creature you can see in burst
Effect: You make a Dungeoneering monster knowledge check to determine the target's resistances and vulnerabilities. If the check succeeds, you or one ally who can hear you gains a +4 power bonus to his or her next attack roll against the target before the end of your next turn.

Eyes of the Deep Delver — **Dungeoneering Utility 6**

Long hours of working in dimness allow you to focus your senses for a moment to see in utter darkness.

Encounter
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You gain blindsight 10 until the end of your next turn.

Trap Sense — **Dungeoneering Utility 10**

As the trap springs, your experience in dealing with such hazards lets you step aside and leave a foe at the trap's mercy.

Encounter
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: A trap or a hazard makes a melee or a ranged attack roll against you
Effect: You gain a +4 power bonus to all defenses against the attack. If the attack misses you, the trap repeats the attack as a free action against an enemy adjacent to you.

Endurance

Adventuring is not for the weak. Most heroes who take up such a life are made of sterner stuff than the average mortal, yet you put even those bold souls to shame. Full of vigor, you do not succumb to the injuries that might hinder another. Endurance powers build on your natural hardiness, allowing you to shrug off injuries, ignore damage, and keep yourself and your allies fighting.

You must be trained in Endurance to gain and use Endurance powers.

Endure Pain — **Endurance Utility 2**

You grin and bear it, shrugging off the pain of a new wound.

Daily
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You are hit by an attack
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, you gain resistance to all damage equal to 5 + your Constitution modifier.

Invigorating Presence — **Endurance Utility 2**

Inspired by your resilience, your allies find the will to overcome challenges.

Daily
Standard Action **Close** burst 5
Requirement: Your second wind must be available for you to use.
Target: Each ally in burst
Effect: You use your second wind, and each target gains temporary hit points equal to 10 + your Constitution modifier.

Diehard — **Endurance Utility 16**

Though blood pours from a dozen wounds, you refuse to lie down and die.

Daily
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You drop to 0 hit points or fewer
Effect: Until you aren't dying or until the end of the encounter, the dying condition doesn't cause you to fall unconscious, but you are dazed.

COMMENTARY

HEAL

Mike Mearls: It's critical that skill powers don't overshadow territory we normally reserve for a role or a specific class. The Heal skill powers are the best demonstration of this concept. They're useful, but a cleric or a shaman is a better healer than a character with these powers. We wanted these powers to offer a great fallback option or to help a group that doesn't have a leader, but we didn't want them to overshadow an entire role.

Heal

Injuries are part of every adventurer's life. Sword cuts, arrow punctures, burns from flaming breath, and countless other afflictions arise over the course of a typical adventure. Your companions can usually take care of themselves, but in a crisis, your training provides a much-needed boost. Heal powers give you a wide range of methods to care for comrades, helping them draw on their inner strength and even return from the brink of death.

You must be trained in Heal to gain and use Heal powers.

Healer's Gift — **Heal Utility 2**

You tend to a fallen comrade and stave off death's touch.

Encounter ✦ Healing
Standard Action **Melee** 1
Target: One dying creature
Effect: The target can spend a healing surge.

Swift Recovery — **Heal Utility 6**

You address a companion's most critical wounds to get him or her back into the battle.

Encounter
Minor Action **Melee** 1
Target: One ally
Effect: The target can use his or her second wind without taking an action to do so.

Time Out — **Heal Utility 10**

You grant your comrade a moment of respite.

Encounter
Minor Action **Melee** 1
Target: One ally
Effect: The target regains the use of second wind if he or she has already used it during this encounter.

History

To some, history is nothing more than dusty tomes and useless trivia. But as the saying goes, those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it. From your studies you can recall useful facts that apply to everything from the magical to the mundane. History powers demonstrate your exceptional education, letting you remember useful details with perfect clarity or recall the tactics of historic battles while you are in combat.

You must be trained in History to gain and use History powers.

Perfect Recall **History Utility 2**

Your mind is a steel trap; nothing escapes it.

At-Will
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You would make an Intelligence check
Effect: You make a History check in place of the Intelligence check.

Historical Revelation **History Utility 6**

When your ally struggles to recall an important fact, you supply a story to nudge him or her onto the right path.

Encounter
Immediate Reaction **Close** burst 5
Trigger: An ally within 5 squares of you makes a knowledge check and dislikes the result
Target: The triggering ally in burst
Effect: The target rerolls the knowledge check and uses either result.

COMMENTARY

HISTORY

Peter Schaefer: The passive skills were the most challenging for design and development. Skills like Arcana, Religion, and Streetwise, which are more about knowing something or learning something than *doing* something, are hard to hang interesting powers on. The inverse was also true: Active skills, such as Acrobatics, Bluff, Stealth, and Thievery are more inspiring, making their powers easier to concept, design, and develop.

Tactician's Measure **History Utility 10**

The enemies' movements are similar to those used in a skirmish you once studied. You use knowledge of it to outmaneuver a foe.

Encounter
Immediate Reaction **Melee** 1
Trigger: An enemy enters a square adjacent to you or to an ally adjacent to you
Target: You or the ally
Effect: The target shifts 1 square and gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of your next turn.

Insight

You can strongly empathize with others and thus anticipate their actions and assess their motives. You might be a compassionate soul, who connects with everyone you meet, or a calculating plotter, who peers into others' hearts to learn how best to exploit them. Insight powers make you an expert observer, helping you guide negotiations as you see fit. These powers also have useful combat applications, letting you read your enemies and outmaneuver them.

You must be trained in Insight to gain and use Insight powers.

Anticipate Maneuver **Insight Utility 2**

You read your opponent like an open book and outsmart it.

Encounter
Minor Action **Melee** 1
Target: One creature
Effect: You make an Insight check opposed by a Bluff check that the target makes as a free action. If your check succeeds, the target grants combat advantage to you until the end of your next turn.

Prescient Maneuver **Insight Utility 6**

Your enemy moves, and you match its steps with a countermove.

Encounter
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy within 5 squares of you moves willingly
Effect: You shift a number of squares equal to one-half your speed.

Insightful Comment **Insight Utility 10**

You assess the situation and offer words of advice that guide the conversation in a fruitful direction.

Encounter
Minor Action **Close** burst 5
Target: You and each ally in burst
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, each target gains a bonus to Bluff checks, Diplomacy checks, and Intimidate checks equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Intimidate

Intimidation is all about implied threat, a convincing promise of pain or deprivation. You can exude menace at will, making others nervous by your presence alone. Sometimes a whisper is enough to make people do as you wish. Intimidate powers allow you to hone your threatening presence into a potent tool, whether on the battlefield or over a sumptuous meal. You can rattle your enemies, urge your friends back into battle, and unnerve intractable adversaries.

You must be trained in Intimidate to gain and use Intimidate powers.

COMMENTARY

INTIMIDATE
Mike Mearls: While we didn't want skill powers to overshadow a role, we also picked out a few that are a good match for augmenting one role or letting a character dabble in it. An intimidating fighter makes sense, as does a warlord with Heal skill powers. Looking at skills in terms of roles was a useful way to direct their powers' design.

Ominous Threat **Intimidate Utility 2**

You draw your enemy's attention to rest squarely on you.

Encounter
Free Action **Melee** 1
Trigger: You hit an enemy with a melee attack
Target: The enemy you hit
Effect: You mark the target until the end of your next turn. In addition, one ally marked by the target is no longer marked.

Demoralize Foe **Intimidate Utility 6**

You spit an ugly threat at your adversary, making it think twice before it attacks you.

Encounter ✦ Fear
Free Action **Melee** 1
Trigger: You hit an enemy with a melee attack
Target: The enemy you hit
Effect: The target takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls against you until the end of your next turn.

Snap Out of It **Intimidate Utility 10**

A smack across the face brings your ally back to his or her senses.

Encounter
Minor Action **Melee** touch
Target: One ally subject to a dazing, dominating, or stunning effect that a save can end
Effect: The target makes a saving throw against the effect.

Nature

The world holds few secrets from a person with your training and powers of observation. You can recognize plants and animals on sight, identify hazards, and find paths through the wild. Nature powers allow you to work more effectively with beasts, to find the most advantageous ground to begin a battle, and to guide your allies through perilous lands.

You must be trained in Nature to gain and use Nature powers.

Nature Sense **Nature Utility 2**

The forest is quiet . . . too quiet.

Daily
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You would make an initiative check in a natural environment.
Effect: You make a Nature check in place of your initiative check. In addition, you and your allies gain a +4 bonus to all defenses until the end of the first round of the encounter.

Practiced Rider **Nature Utility 6**

So familiar are you with the saddle, you can spring to or from your mount in a flash.

At-Will
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You mount or dismount a willing, adjacent creature that has the mount keyword.

Spot the Path **Nature Utility 10**

Having walked miles of broken trails, you know how to find the safest way through the most treacherous terrain.

Encounter
Minor Action **Close burst 5**
Target: You and each ally in burst
Effect: Each target ignores difficult terrain until the end of your next turn.

Perception

Few details escape your keen senses. You can spot a falcon on a cloudy day, track prey through barren mountains, and hear the faintest noises through solid doors. Perception powers give you additional opportunities to apply your uncanny awareness. With them, you can pinpoint distant enemies, spot an ambush, or guide a companion's strike to an enemy's most vulnerable spot.

You must be trained in Perception to gain and use Perception powers.

COMMENTARY

PERCEPTION
Mike Mearls: Skill powers give us the chance to really reward characters who max out their bonus with a skill. When it comes to DCs, we can't normally set them so high that we reward such a character with a slim chance at success. Instead, most DCs are set to reward such characters with near-automatic success. That's useful, but it can prove a little anti-climatic. Powers that give you a benefit based on a check's total result make you happy that your bonus is 10 points above the average trained PC.

Far Sight **Perception Utility 2**

You focus your senses to pick out enemies at the edge of your vision.

Encounter
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, your ranged weapon attack rolls take no penalty from long range, and they ignore cover and concealment, but not superior cover or total concealment.

Guided Shot **Perception Utility 6**

You spot a critical weakness in a foe's defenses, which an ally can exploit to deadly effect.

Encounter
Immediate Interrupt **Close burst 10**
Trigger: An ally within 10 squares of you misses with an attack against AC
Target: The triggering ally in burst
Effect: The target's attack is made against Reflex instead of AC.

Uncanny Instincts **Perception Utility 10**

Your keen senses guide your and your friend's reactions.

Daily
Free Action **Close** burst 5
Trigger: You roll initiative and dislike the result
Target: You and one ally in burst
Effect: The targets use your passive Perception check in place of their initiative checks.

Religion

Your extensive reading of religious texts gives you insight into cosmological concerns. You have studied the primeval struggles between the gods and the primordials, the role the gods play in the world, and even the perversion of the natural order embodied by undead. Religion powers enable you to apply theological principles to combating the world's ills. With these powers, you can aid your allies and use your faith as a shield.

You must be trained in Religion to gain and use Religion powers.

Faith Healing **Religion Utility 2**

Your prayers help an ally recover from injury.

Daily ✦ Healing
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Effect: The target can spend a healing surge.

Theologian's Shield **Religion Utility 6**

Calling on lore culled from sacred texts, you know how to protect yourself from your enemy's attack.

Encounter
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You are hit by a necrotic or a radiant attack
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, you gain necrotic resistance and radiant resistance equal to 5 + your Intelligence modifier.

Conviction **Religion Utility 10**

You whisper a prayer for aid to overcome hardship.

Encounter
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You gain a +5 bonus to the next saving throw you make before the start of your next turn.

Stealth

You learned early on that the enemy that doesn't see you is the enemy least likely to repel your attacks. After honing your sneaky talents, you can slip through the shadows, avoiding attention until the right moment to attack presents itself. Stealth powers demonstrate your prowess at avoiding detection, letting you maximize concealment and cover, shadow enemies, and move without drawing notice.

You must be trained in Stealth to gain and use Stealth powers.

COMMENTARY

STREETWISE

Robert J. Schwalb: Streetwise was the trickiest skill to work on for me. It's a weird skill in that it is the only skill that doesn't have an application in combat. History, while similar, can at least offer information about locations, room features, and so on. Streetwise also has the distinction of being the only skill that can truncate what might be a skill challenge into a single check mechanism, compressing several hours of game time into a single die roll. Creating powers that would broaden this tricky skill's applications into in-combat and out-of-combat areas proved difficult, but, as you can see, not impossible.

Obscured Avoidance **Stealth Utility 2**

Although your enemy's attention is on you, its inability to see you clearly can keep you out of harm's way.

At-Will
Minor Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be marked and have concealment from the creature that marked you.
Effect: The marked condition ends on you.

Concealed Shift **Stealth Utility 6**

Your enemy misjudges your position, giving you a chance to duck out of the way.

Encounter
Immediate Reaction **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy misses you with a melee or a ranged attack while you have concealment or cover from it
Effect: You shift 1 square.

Crowd Cover **Stealth Utility 10**

You keep your enemies between you and their companion, using them as a shield.

Encounter
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy makes a ranged attack roll against you
Effect: Enemies adjacent to you and in the attack's way grant cover to you against the attack. If the attack misses, the attacker rerolls it against one enemy that granted cover to you against it.

Streetwise

You are most at home in the city. Even if you have never been there before, as soon as you walk a city's streets, rub elbows with its citizens, and feel its pulse beneath your feet, you are on familiar ground. The Streetwise skill comprises more than just ferreting out a community's secrets; it's knowing where to look, how to look, and how to survive while doing so. Streetwise powers hone these survival techniques to

let you avoid notice and evade pursuit in any urban area.

You must be trained in Streetwise to gain and use Streetwise powers.

City Rat — **Streetwise Utility 2**

Like a rat, you are particularly skilled at using the environment, as well as your companions, to stay out of sight.

Encounter
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You end a move action and have cover against at least one creature
Effect: You make a Streetwise check in place of a Stealth check to become hidden from any creature against which you have cover.

Slow Pursuit — **Streetwise Utility 6**

You knock over obstacles, take difficult paths, drop rubbish, and do anything else you can think of to slow your enemies' pursuit.

Encounter
Move Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be in an urban environment.
Effect: You move your speed. At one point during the movement, you create an area of difficult terrain in a close blast 3. The difficult terrain lasts until the end of the encounter.

Navigate Crowds — **Streetwise Utility 10**

A life spent in the city trained you to maneuver through crowds.

Encounter
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You shift your speed. During this movement, you can move through enemies' spaces.

Thievery

The larcenous arts are invaluable for navigating the world's perils. The Thievery skill is useful for dismantling traps, confounding enemies, or bypassing wards and locked doors to reach the best treasure. Most adventuring groups contain someone who at least dabbles in such training. With Thievery powers, you deftly maneuver objects and keep your opponents off balance with your distracting moves.

You must be trained in Thievery to gain and use Thievery powers.

Fast Hands — **Thievery Utility 2**

Your fingers blur as you manipulate objects faster than the eye can follow.

At-Will
Free Action (Special) **Personal**
Effect: You draw or sheathe a weapon, pick up an item in your space or adjacent to it, or retrieve or stow an item.
Special: You can use this power only once per round.

Stolen Defense — **Thievery Utility 6**

You make a move toward your foe, leading it to believe you just robbed it and giving your ally a chance to get the jump on it.

Encounter
Minor Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Effect: You make a Thievery check opposed by the target's passive Perception check. If your check succeeds, the next ally who attacks the target before the end of your next turn gains combat advantage against it for that attack.

Disruptive Stunt — **Thievery Utility 10**

With a flurry of taps, shoves, and nudges, you push past your foe, leaving it flustered.

Encounter
Move Action **Melee** 1
Target: One creature
Effect: You move your speed through the target's space to a square adjacent to it. This movement does not provoke an opportunity attack from the target. In addition, the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the start of your next turn.

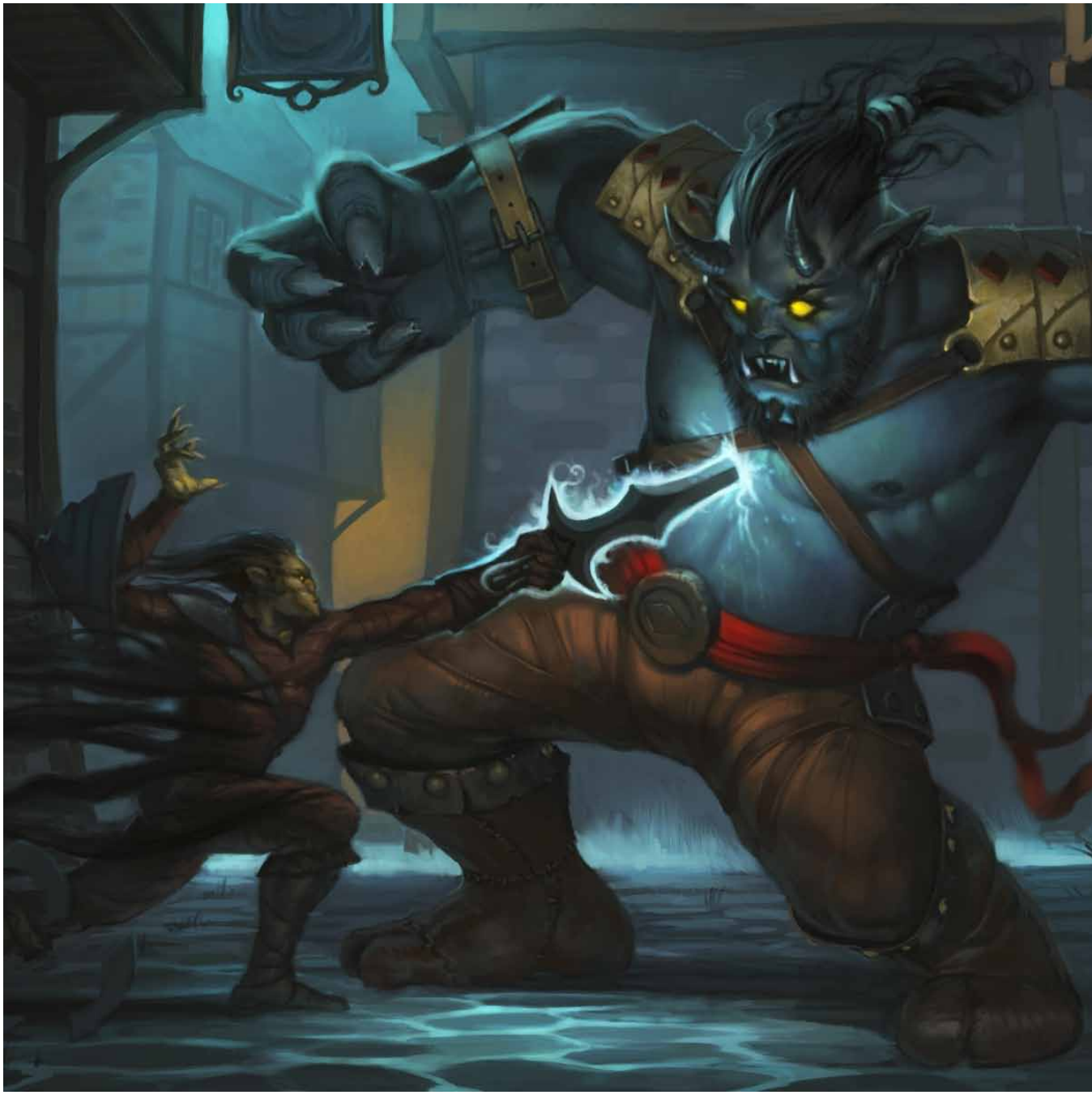
About the Authors

Mike Mearls is the Lead Designer for the Dungeons & Dragons roleplaying game. His recent credits include *H1: Keep on the Shadowfell* and *Player's Handbook 2*.

Robert J. Schwalb works as a freelance designer for Wizards of the Coast. His recent credits include *Martial Power*, *Draconomicon*, and the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*. Robert lives in Tennessee with his incredibly patient wife, Stacee, and his pride of fiendish werecats, but is happiest when chained to his desk, toiling for his dark masters in Seattle.

Assassin

By Mike Mearls
Illustrations by Emrah Elmasli



Class Traits

"By the time you see me, it is too late to save yourself."

Role: Striker. You are the ghost in the night and the whisper on the wind. Barriers are worthless against you, and you strike your foes with sudden, precise force. You lean toward controller as a secondary role.
Power Source: Shadow. You have bound your soul to the Shadowfell and become a being of darkness.
Key Abilities: Dexterity, Charisma, Constitution

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather; light shield
Weapon Proficiencies: One-handed simple melee, military heavy blades, military light blades, simple ranged
Implements: Ki focuses
Bonus to Defense: +1 Fortitude, +1 Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 10 + Constitution score
Hit Points per Level Gained: 4
Healing Surges per Day: 6 + Constitution modifier

Trained Skills: Stealth. From the class skills list below, choose four more trained skills at 1st level.

Class Skills: Acrobatics (Dex), Arcana (Int), Athletics (Str), Bluff (Cha), Endurance (Con), Insight (Wis), Perception (Wis), Stealth (Dex), Streetwise (Cha), Thievery (Dex)

Class Features: *Assassin's shroud*, Guild Training, *shade form, shadow step*

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Few creatures embrace shadow magic without both a compelling reason and a measure of desperation. Not many visit the Shadowfell willingly, let alone pledge a shard of their souls to it. Yet that is exactly what assassins, and other practitioners of shadow magic, do to gain their power.

As an assassin, you cede a portion of yourself to the Shadowfell, replacing a fundamental part of your being with a dark reflection of your true self. At times, you can manifest this twisted image in place of your body so that you can face attacks with little cause for concern. Also, the infusion of shadow magic allows you to spot the weakest points in a victim's defenses. With a few moments of study, you can reduce even the stoutest warrior to a corpse.

If others know that you are an assassin, you might find that few trust you. In some civilized realms, the study of shadow magic and assassination is banned on pain of death. In the past, and as a response to the outcry against them, assassins formed coteries, or guilds, of like-minded slayers, and each one delves into the study of shadow magic and develops unique methods of killing. A guild provides you with a measure of protection, and its grandmasters expect obedience and fealty. The wars between guilds, and the struggles within them, might never spill into mass battles, but they still leave dozens of slain folk in their wake.

As an assassin, you are an outcast. You traded away part of your soul for the power of death. Perhaps you seek justice against a powerful enemy, or maybe you had no other way to preserve yourself in the face of a bleak, uncaring world. Whatever drew you onto the assassin's path, you are an avatar of death and a trained killer from whom few can escape unharmed.

Assassin Class Features

Assassins have the following class features.

Assassin's Shroud

You gain the *assassin's shroud* power. The dark magic of the Shadowfell courses through your veins, tainting your soul but granting you the ability to subject an enemy to invisible shrouds that reveal its weakest points. The more of your shrouds there are on a target, the deadlier a blow you can strike against it.

Guild Training

Assassins gain their abilities by following a training regimen developed by a particular guild. Even an assassin taught by an individual master studies a set of teachings that were once developed by a guild.

Assassins' guilds claim towns and other territories as their hunting grounds. Nonguild assassins who seek to practice their art must first gain the permission of the local grandmaster of assassins. In some areas, particularly large cities that have many potential contracts, two guilds go to war for control of the slayers' trade. In that situation, you must choose a side or face the wrath of both factions.

Choose one of the following options. The choice you make gives you the benefit described below and also provides bonuses to certain assassin powers, as detailed in those powers.

Bleak Disciple: When you hit an unbloodied target, you gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier. Add 2 to the temporary hit points gained at 11th level and 4 at 21st level.

Githyanki brought the tradition of the Bleak Disciple from the Astral Sea. It teaches its adherents to forge the stuff of shadow into a weapon they can use against their foes. Its strictest followers keep a white cloth that they dab in the blood of each slain foe, and before they attack a chosen target, they reflect on this memento of the foes they have defeated.

Night Stalker: You gain a bonus to damage rolls equal to your Charisma modifier against any target that is adjacent to none of your enemies.

The drow assassins who founded this guild at Lolth's instruction held that fear and misdirection are as deadly as a poisoned blade. This tradition teaches how best to draw on shadow magic to terrorize and deceive enemies.

Shade Form

You gain the *shade form* power. When you gave part of your soul to the Shadowfell, the power of that dark realm fused with your material form. As a result, you can assume a shadowy form that allows you to pass through barriers and evade enemies that you could not normally avoid.

When you adopt this form, you blur, your skin becomes gray, and all the gear you carry and the clothes you wear adopt similarly dull colors. Your eyes lose their pupils, becoming blank, white orbs. You cannot damage your foes without returning to your normal form, which prevents you from doing more than maneuvering in for the kill against your enemies.

Shadow Step

You gain the *shadow step* power. The shadow energy surrounding every creature touches the Shadowfell slightly, for the realm of death is a creature's eventual destination. You have the ability to walk the shadow pathways from one creature to another.

Assassin Overview

Characteristics: You can turn into an insubstantial creature of shadow. While you are in that form, even the most alert sentinel can overlook your approach, and attacks pass through you with little harm. When you spot your target, you study its weaknesses as you prepare to deliver a killing blow.

Religion: Assassins who pursue evil creatures are often worshipers of the Raven Queen, who teaches that death is the great leveler, a tool the world needs to end abuses by powerful beings. Evil assassins wallow in the misery and fear they cause, or they revel in performing an exquisite kill. Such folk usually venerate Zehir or Lolth.

Races: Revenants have the combination of implacability and physical ability needed to flourish as assassins. Half-orcs also excel as assassins, often having a brutish nature that makes the assassin's art palatable to them. Drow are superlative assassins, both because they grow up in a society that values skilled murder and because they are comfortable with working in darkness. Halflings make good assassins since they can combine their natural stealthiness with a native curiosity that makes hiding from them difficult. Changeling assassins possess an unsurpassed ability to infiltrate and kill from a position of trust.

Implements and Weapons

Assassins focus their shadow energy through a ki focus, which is not an object they wield but a reservoir of magical power within themselves. When using a ki focus, an assassin taps into the power of shadow magic and channels it into both implement and weapon attacks.

You can imbue your ki focus with magic as if it were a physical implement. When you have a magic ki focus, you can add its enhancement bonus to the attack rolls and the damage rolls of assassin powers and assassin paragon path powers that have the implement keyword. You can also add its enhancement bonus to the attack rolls and the damage rolls of any weapon attack you make using a weapon with which you're proficient.

You can also use a weapon with which you're proficient as an implement. While wielding the weapon as an implement, the characteristics of the weapon you use—proficiency bonus, damage die, and weapon properties (such as defensive or high crit)—are irrelevant to your implement powers.

If you have a magic ki focus and wield a magic weapon, you choose before you use an attack power whether to draw on the magic of your ki focus or to employ the magic of your weapon. Your choice determines which enhancement bonus, critical hit effects, and magic item properties and powers you can apply to attacks with that power. You can't, for example, use the enhancement bonus of your ki focus and the property of your magic weapon with the same attack power.

Creating an Assassin

Assassins rely on Dexterity, Charisma, and Constitution for their powers. You can choose any powers you like, but assassins typically choose powers that complement their choice of Guild Training.

Bleak Disciple Assassin

You have studied the raw stuff of shadow and can use your abilities to manipulate and control the shadows cast by your enemies. At your command, shadows become physical objects that reach forth to grab and crush your foes, or hold them still while you ready a killing blow. Constitution should be your second highest ability score, after Dexterity. Charisma is a good third choice, to buoy your Will. Choose the Bleak Disciple option for your Guild Training class feature.

Suggested Class Feature: Bleak Disciple
Suggested Feat: Shadow Veil Assassin
Suggested Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Endurance, Stealth, Thievery
Suggested At-Will Powers: *inescapable blade, shadow storm*
Suggested Encounter Power: *smothering shadow*
Suggested Daily Power: *terrifying visage*

Night Stalker Assassin

You tap into shadow magic to spread terror, cloud the reason of your enemies, drive away their allies, and leave all your foes vulnerable to your attack. After Dexterity, Charisma should be your second highest ability score. Constitution is a good third choice due to the additional hit points it grants. Choose the Night Stalker option for your Guild Training class feature, and focus on fear powers and powers that grant an additional benefit due to your Guild Training choice.

Suggested Class Feature: Night Stalker

Suggested Feat: Nightmare Killer

Suggested Skills: Arcana, Bluff, Insight, Stealth, Thievery

Suggested At-Will Powers: *executioner's noose, leaping shade*

Suggested Encounter Power: *nightmare shades*

Suggested Daily Power: *strangling shadow*

Assassin Powers

Your powers are called hexes. They draw on your shadowed soul to enhance your combat techniques or harm your enemies directly. You can use shadows as distractions, weapons, and secret paths to destroy your enemies.

Class Features

Each assassin gains the powers *assassin's shroud*, *shade form*, and *shadow step*.

Assassin's Shroud — Assassin Feature

You cause invisible shrouds to settle on your foe. At your command, the shrouds reveal the target's weak points to your keen gaze.

At-Will ✦ Shadow
Free Action (Special) **Close** burst 10
Target: One enemy you can see in burst
Effect: You subject the target to your shroud. If any of your shrouds are already on the target, you subject it to an additional shroud, up to a maximum of four. The shrouds last until you use this power against a different enemy or until the end of the encounter.

Before you make an attack roll against the target, you choose to invoke either all your shrouds on it or none of them. If you invoke your shrouds, the attack deals 1d6 damage per shroud, minus one shroud if the attack misses, and all your shrouds then vanish from the target. This damage roll never benefits from bonuses to damage rolls, and is in addition to the attack's damage, if any.

Level 11: 1d6 + 3 damage per shroud.
Level 21: 1d6 + 6 damage per shroud.
Special: You can use this power only on your turn and only once per turn.

Shade Form — Assassin Feature

You transform yourself into a being of shadow, becoming more difficult to notice and to harm.

Encounter ✦ Shadow
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You assume a shadowy form that lasts until you make an attack roll or until the end of your next turn. While in this form, you are insubstantial, and you gain vulnerable 5 radiant. In addition, you can make Stealth checks to become hidden if you have any cover or concealment, and you can use cover granted by your allies both to become hidden and to remain hidden.
Sustain Minor: The form persists.

Shadow Step — Assassin Feature

You vanish into the shadow energy around one creature and then step out of it near another creature.

At-Will ✦ Shadow, Teleportation
Move Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be adjacent to a creature.
Effect: You teleport 3 squares to a square adjacent to a different creature.

Level 11: Teleport 4 squares.
Level 21: Teleport 5 squares.

Level 1 At-Will Hexes

Executioner's Noose — Assassin Attack 1

You gather shadows into the form of a noose, cast it around your foe's neck, and pull.

At-Will ✦ Force, Implement, Shadow
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d6 + Dexterity modifier force damage, and you pull the target 2 squares. The target is slowed until the end of your next turn.

Level 21: 2d6 + Dexterity modifier force damage.

Inescapable Blade — Assassin Attack 1

You stop several feet away from your foe and slash with your weapon. Your weapon's shadow closes the distance, and mundane obstacles do not slow it.

At-Will ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon + 2 reach
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC. The attack ignores cover and superior cover.
Hit: 1[W] damage.
Level 21: 2[W] damage.

Leaping Shade — Assassin Attack 1

As your weapon makes contact, the shrouds you have placed on your victim dig cruelly into its flesh.

At-Will ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. If you didn't invoke your shrouds on the target, it takes 1 extra damage for each of your shrouds on it.
Level 21: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and 2 extra damage for each of your shrouds on the target.

Shadow Storm — Assassin Attack 1

Your tie to the Shadowfell calls on the living shadows around your foe, causing them to claw at it as you make your attack.

At-Will ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, plus 1 damage for each creature adjacent to the target.
Level 21: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, plus 2 damage for each creature adjacent to the target.

Level 1 Encounter Hexes

Gloom Thief — Assassin Attack 1

As you slash at your foe, you seize part of its shadow, which you use to hide yourself from your enemies' eyes.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. Until the end of your next turn, you are invisible while within 2 squares of the target.

Nightmare Shades — Assassin Attack 1

The darkness in the corner of your foe's eyes shifts and moves, causing it to glance about in terror. In its panic, it forgets the true threat to its life.

Encounter ✦ Fear, Implement, Psychic, Shadow
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + Dexterity modifier psychic damage, and the target grants combat advantage to you until the end of your next turn.
Night Stalker: Until the end of your next turn, you gain a power bonus to damage rolls against the target equal to your Charisma modifier.

Shadow Darts — Assassin Attack 1

You launch a volley of chilling darts of shadow energy at your foe.

Encounter ✦ Cold, Implement, Shadow
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex. Make three attack rolls. If any of them hit, resolve them as a single hit, and all of them must miss for the attack to miss.
Hit: 1d8 cold damage if one of the attack rolls hits, 2d8 cold damage if two hit, or 3d8 cold damage if three hit.

Smothering Shadow — Assassin Attack 1

You stab at your foe and channel shadow magic into its body, causing its own shadow to hinder it.

Encounter ✦ Illusion, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target is slowed until the end of your next turn.
Bleak Disciple: The target takes extra damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Level 1 Daily Hexes

Grave Spike — Assassin Attack 1

As you strike your foe, your weapon shoots hundreds of tiny shadow spikes into it, wracking it with pain.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends). Whenever the target takes this ongoing damage, the target falls prone.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls against the target while your shrouds are on it.

Strangling Shadow — Assassin Attack 1

Your attack distracts your foe with pain just long enough for you to weave a noose of shadows around its neck.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 damage and is immobilized (save ends both).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).
Effect: Until the target saves against this power, you can pull the target 3 squares as a free action once during each of your turns.

Targeted for Death — Assassin Attack 1

A black dart streaks from your hand to strike the target, surrounding it in a warmth-stealing gloom.

Daily ✦ Cold, Implement, Shadow
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 3d8 + Dexterity modifier cold damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever you use *assassin's shroud* against the target, you subject it to two shrouds instead of one.

Terrifying Visage — Assassin Attack 1

Your face distorts into a horrid visage, which drives your foes before you, but leaves one victim rooted in place.

Daily ✦ Fear, Implement, Psychic, Shadow
Standard Action **Close** blast 5
Primary Target: One creature adjacent to you in blast
Primary Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + Dexterity modifier psychic damage, and the primary target is immobilized (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the primary target is immobilized until the end of your next turn.
Effect: Make a secondary attack.
Secondary Target: Each creature other than the primary target in blast
Secondary Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: You push the secondary target 4 squares.
Miss: You push the secondary target 2 squares.

Level 2 Utility Hexes

Cat's Trickery — Assassin Utility 2

You plunge the room into darkness at the same time that your eyes pierce those shadows.

Encounter ✦ Shadow
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, you both gain darkvision and douse one light source that is within 10 squares of you and no larger than a lantern.

Cloak of Shades — Assassin Utility 2

A shadowy haze swirls around you, hiding you from view.

Encounter ✦ Shadow
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, you gain concealment against all creatures and are invisible to creatures that are more than 5 squares away from you.

Lurking Shadow — Assassin Utility 2

You meld with the shadows, allowing you to spy on your enemies without fear of discovery.

Daily ✦ Shadow
Standard Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be in dim light or darkness.
Effect: You become invisible and silent until the end of your next turn, until you move more than 2 squares on your turn, or until you enter a square of bright light. If a creature tries to enter your space before the effect ends, you can either shift 1 square as a free action or remain where you are. If you remain where you are, the effect ends.
Sustain Standard: The effect persists.

Shadow Meld — Assassin Utility 2

Your shadow lengthens to veil your allies from your foes.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, allies within 5 squares of you can use your Stealth modifier for their Stealth checks.

Level 3 Encounter Hexes

Army of the Night — Assassin Attack 3

Your shadow magic spawns a phantom mob in your foe's mind, and the mob spurs the foe to strike out at its allies in terror.

Encounter ✦ Fear, Illusion, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. Until the end of your next turn, the target makes a melee basic attack as an opportunity action against any enemy that ends its turn adjacent to the target.
Night Stalker: The target makes the attack with a power bonus to attack rolls equal to your Charisma modifier.

Cloaking Mist — Assassin Attack 3

You draw the stuff of shadows to your hands and cast it forth, creating cold, black mist that chokes your enemies and gives you a chance to vanish.

Encounter ✦ Cold, Implement, Shadow
Standard Action **Close** blast 3
Target: Each creature in blast
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + Dexterity modifier cold damage.
Effect: Until the end of your turn, you can make a Stealth check to hide from the targets even if you have only cover or concealment against them.

Inescapable Shadow — Assassin Attack 3

You step from your foe's shadow, driving your blade into the foe before it can make a sound.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Teleportation, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** 1
Effect: Before the attack, you teleport 5 squares to a square adjacent to your *assassin's shroud* target.
Target: Your *assassin's shroud* target
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.

Nightshade's Kiss — Assassin Attack 3

Your strike infects your foe's mind, causing the foe to recoil from every attack.

Encounter ✦ Fear, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and you slide the target 2 squares. Until the end of your next turn, you can slide the target 1 square as a free action whenever the target is hit.
Bleak Disciple: The number of squares you slide the target increases by 1.

Assassins and the Ki Focus

Assassins use ki focuses for the ability to augment mundane weapons. After all, a guard patrol is far more suspicious of the wanderer carrying a greatsword than of the unarmed peasant. Using ki focuses, assassins wield whatever weapons are at hand, or even unarmed strikes, to deliver attacks.

When you use your ki focus with a weapon attack, you focus shadow magic into your weapon. Some assassins carry a few different weapons to ensure that they have the right tool for the job, and they take the Weapon Proficiency feat to expand their choice of tools. An accurate weapon, such as a longsword, is a good tool for taking down a heavily armored warrior. When an assassin battles a brute that relies on endurance rather than defense, a less accurate but devastating weapon such as a greataxe proves useful.

Since your ki focus augments your basic attacks, a thrown weapon wielded in your off hand serves as the perfect complement to your primary weapon. You can throw a dagger to cut down a fleeing guard, and feats such as Two-Weapon Fighting improve your melee abilities.

Level 5 Daily Hexes

Heart of Dust — Assassin Attack 5

Shadow venom courses through your target, causing it to shed a gray dust that chokes nearby enemies.

Daily ✦ Poison, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends). Whenever the target takes this ongoing damage, each enemy within 2 squares of it takes 5 poison damage.
Miss: Half damage, and each enemy within 2 squares of the target takes 3 poison damage.

Shadow Soul — Assassin Attack 5

You tear away a piece of your foe's shadow and tuck it into the hollow in your soul. You can sense your foe now and step from its shadow at will.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Teleportation, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, you gain a +5 power bonus to Perception checks against the target.
Sustain Minor: The power bonus persists, and if the target is not hidden from you, you teleport 20 squares to a square adjacent to it.

Treacherous Shades — Assassin Attack 5

You seize control of your enemies' shadows, which rattle the enemies by turning on them.

Daily ✦ Implement, Psychic, Shadow
Standard Action **Close** blast 3
Target: Each creature in blast
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + Dexterity modifier psychic damage, and the target grants combat advantage (save ends). Until the target saves against this effect, enemies grant combat advantage while adjacent to the target.
Miss: Half damage, and the target grants combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Twilight Assassin — Assassin Attack 5

Your shadow leaps from you to attack your enemies, and the two of you fight as one.

Daily ✦ Conjuration, Implement, Shadow
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Primary Target: One creature
Primary Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + Dexterity modifier damage.
Effect: You conjure a shadowy duplicate of yourself in an unoccupied square adjacent to the primary target. The duplicate occupies its space, and it lasts until the end of the encounter. Whenever you use a move action, you can also move the duplicate 5 squares. You can flank enemies with the duplicate, but your allies cannot. Until the duplicate vanishes, it can make the following attack.
Minor Action **Melee** 1
Secondary Target: One creature
Secondary Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 3 damage, or 6 damage if the secondary target is your *assassin's shroud* target.

Level 6 Utility Hexes

Darting Shadow — Assassin Utility 6

You leap from one hiding spot to the next, remaining hidden from view thanks to your mastery of shadow magic.

At-Will ✦ Shadow
Move Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be hidden.
Effect: You move your speed. You remain hidden from each enemy against which you have cover, superior cover, concealment, or total concealment at the end of the movement.

Sheltering Dark — Assassin Utility 6

Shadows move to surround you and provide you with a spot from which to watch your enemies without fear of detection.

Encounter ✦ Illusion, Shadow, Zone
Minor Action **Close** burst 2
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. You have concealment while you are within the zone. When you leave the zone, you become invisible until the end of your turn.

Slayer's Escape — Assassin Utility 6

After you are struck, you fold shadows around yourself and disappear.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Teleportation
Immediate Reaction **Personal**
Trigger: You are hit by an attack
Effect: You teleport 5 squares, and you become invisible until the start of your next turn.

Slithering Shadow — Assassin Utility 6

You move like a shadow in a flickering light, slipping from one spot to another in the blink of an eye.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, you can shift 1 square as a minor action.

Level 7 Encounter Hexes

Captured Shadow — Assassin Attack 7

As you strike your foe, you steal its shadow. In a moment, you can teleport your foe back to your side.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Teleportation, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. Once before the end of your next turn, you can use a free action to teleport the target to a square adjacent to you. That square cannot be hindering terrain.

Echoing Threat — Assassin Attack 7

Your foe sees threats in every corner and betrayal in every eye. If it cannot escape the press of the crowd, it will go mad.

Encounter ✦ Implement, Psychic, Shadow, Teleportation
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 1d10 + Dexterity modifier psychic damage. At the end of its next turn, the target takes 10 psychic damage if any creatures are within 2 squares of it.
Night Stalker: During your next turn, you can teleport a number of squares equal to your Charisma modifier as a minor action. You must end the teleportation closer to the target.

Shadow Jack — Assassin Attack 7

You strike your foe and then merge with its shadow. Your enemies' attacks pass through you and hit your foe instead.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** 1
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and you shift 1 square into the target's space and remain there until the start of your next turn. While there, you are insubstantial, you move with the target (this movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks), and any melee or ranged attack that misses you hits the target instead, unless the target is the attacker. At the start of your next turn, you slide 1 square to a square adjacent to the target.

Shadow Link — Assassin Attack 7

Your attack forges a brief bond with your foe that allows you to shroud it with greater darkness each time you feel pain.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: Your *assassin's shroud* target
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. Until the end of your next turn, you can use your *assassin's shroud* against the target whenever you are hit.
Bleak Disciple: You gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier when the attack hits.

Level 9 Daily Hexes

Black Garrote — Assassin Attack 9

A wisp of shadow stuff stretches between your hands. You loop it around your foe's throat and transform the shadow into a material as hard as steel.

Daily ✦ Implement, Reliable, Shadow
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: You grab the target. Until the grab ends, the target takes a –5 penalty to all escape attempts and a –2 penalty to attack rolls against you. When the grab ends, the target takes 1d10 + your Dexterity modifier damage.
Sustain Standard: The grab persists, and the target takes 2d10 + your Dexterity modifier damage.
Special: You can instead sustain the grab as a minor action. If you do so, the power's effect ends, and the grab becomes a normal grab.

Bound by Shadow — Assassin Attack 9

As your weapon pierces your foe, you send deadly shadow energy coursing into it, linking your two fates. When you are harmed, so is your foe.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, the target takes 5 damage whenever an enemy, including the target, deals damage to you.

Obscuring Shadow — Assassin Attack 9

You slash at your foe, calling up shadows that blot you from its vision.

Daily ✦ Illusion, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The target cannot see you (save ends).

Wall of Shadows — Assassin Attack 9

You weave a skein of shadows that bites your enemies with a deathly chill.

Daily ✦ Cold, Conjuration, Implement, Shadow, Teleportation
Standard Action **Area** wall 5 within 10 squares
Effect: You conjure a wall of darkness that lasts until the end of your next turn. The wall can be up to 2 squares high, and it blocks line of sight for creatures other than you. Any creature that enters the wall or starts its turn there takes 1d6 + your Dexterity modifier cold damage. If you are in the wall or adjacent to it, you can use a move action to teleport to another square in the wall or adjacent to it.
Sustain Minor: The wall persists.

Level 10 Utility Hexes

Mist Walk — Assassin Utility 10

For a moment, you are like a ghost passing through creatures and objects.

Daily ✦ Shadow
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You shift 6 squares, and you gain phasing during the shift.

Promise of Retribution — Assassin Utility 10

When a foe attacks you, shadows spirit you away, and you take a small part of the foe's being with you.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Teleportation
Immediate Reaction **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy hits you
Target: The triggering enemy
Effect: You teleport 10 squares. Once before the end of the encounter, you can use a move action to teleport to a square adjacent to the target. When you do so, you gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls against the target and a +5 power bonus to damage rolls against it until the end of your turn.

Seeker of Shadow — Assassin Utility 10

Right as combat begins, you disappear into the shadows.

Daily ✦ Shadow
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You roll initiative
Effect: You gain a +4 power bonus to your next damage roll. In addition, you become invisible and silent until you hit an enemy or until the end of the encounter. After hitting the enemy, you remain invisible and silent until the end of your next turn.

Slayer's Endurance — Assassin Utility 10

You draw the comforting darkness close, allowing shadows to carry away the pain of your wounds.

Encounter ✦ Shadow
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: The first time an enemy takes damage from your *assassin's shroud* before the end of your next turn, you gain 5 temporary hit points for each shroud on that enemy.

HEROIC TIER FEATS

Name	Prerequisite	Benefit
Assassin's Cloak	Assassin	Make a Stealth check to hide when you turn invisible
Assassin's Escape	Assassin, *shade form* power	Use *shade form* as an immediate interrupt when damaged
Avernian Emissary Wrath	Tiefling, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power	Once per encounter, use *inferanl wrath* against missed *assassin's shroud* target
Blood Devourer Shifting	Shifter, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power	Deal extra damage to *assassin's shroud* target when you first become bloodied
Brutal Shroud	Assassin, *assassin's shroud* power	Reroll natural 1s on *assassin's shroud* damage dice
Crimson Eye Action	Human, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power	*Assassin's shroud* target gains additional shroud when you spend an action point
Dawn Hunter Training	Elf, assassin	Use *elven accuracy* to reroll damage
Emerald Scale Concealment	Dragonborn, assassin	Become invisible to creature hit by *dragon breath*
Eternal Void Memories	Deva, assassin	Deal extra damage to target when you improve attack with *memory of a thousand lifetimes*
Grave Dust Advantage	Assassin, revenant, *assassin's shroud* power	*Assassin's shroud* target gains another shroud when you use *dark reaping*
Grave Dust Assassin	Assassin, revenant, *assassin's shroud* power	Target of *assassin's shroud* takes damage when you deal damage with *dark reaping*
Hidden Insight	Assassin, *assassin's shroud* power	If you're hidden, creatures aren't aware of your shrouds
Hungry Sky Shadows	Goliath, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power	When you use shrouds and hit an enemy, it takes extra damage
Killer's Insight	Assassin, *assassin's shroud* power	Once per encounter, target gains an extra shroud
Mist Walker Illusion	Gnome, assassin	Use fade away as a free action when you hit with a shadow power
Nightmare Killer	Assassin	Gain +2 bonus to damage rolls with fear powers
Nightmare Step	Assassin	Slide creature 1 square when you miss with fear power
Obsidian Cave Recovery	Dwarf, assassin, *shade form* power	Regain use of *shade form* if you use second wind as a minor action
Phantom Blade Evasion	Halfling, assassin, *shadow step* power	Use *shadow step* as free action when you use *second chance*
Scions of Zarak Initiate	Half-orc, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power	Deal 1d6 damage to shrouded target you miss
Shadow Veil Assassin	Assassin	Shift 1 square when you hit adjacent creature with encounter or daily illusion power
Shadow Veil Disappearance	Assassin	Make a Stealth check to hide from creature you hit with melee illusion power
Twilight Phantom Step	Eladrin, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power	Increase *fey step* distance by 5 squares if you end adjacent to *assassin's shroud* target
Velvet Blade Trick	Half-elf, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power	*Assassin's shroud* target gains another shroud when you use Dilettante racial trait power
Venom Hand Assassin	Assassin	After short or extended rest, weapon deals 1d8 extra poison damage on next successful attack
Venom Hand Killer	Assassin	+2 feat bonus to poison damage rolls
Venom Hand Master	Assassin	Ignore poison resistance and immunity
Venom Handler	Assassin, Venom Hand Assassin feat	Gain resist 5 poison

PARAGON TIER FEATS

Name	Prerequisites	Benefit
Minion of the Dark	11th level, assassin	You gain darkvision
Nightmare Master	11th level, assassin	Creature hit by your fear power is dazed

MULTICLASS FEATS

Name	Prerequisites	Benefit
Shadow Initiate	Dex 13	Training Stealth, use assassin's shroud twice per encounter, and use assassin implements.

Assassin Feats

Assassin's Cloak

Prerequisite: Assassin

Benefit: Whenever you become invisible, you can make a Stealth check to hide as a free action.

Assassin's Escape

Prerequisite: Assassin, *shade form* power

Benefit: You can use your *shade form* as an immediate interrupt when you take damage.

Avernian Emissary Wrath

Prerequisite: Tiefling, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: Once per encounter, when you miss your *assassin's shroud* target, you can use your *infernal wrath* racial power against it, even if you have already used *infernal wrath* during this encounter.

Blood Devourer Shifting

Prerequisite: Shifter, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: The first time you are bloodied during an encounter, choose an enemy that has at least one of your shrouds on it. The next time you attack that enemy before the end of your next turn, you deal damage to that enemy equal to your Dexterity modifier, in addition to the attack's other effects.

Brutal Shroud

Prerequisite: Assassin, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: Whenever you make the damage roll for your *assassin's shroud*, reroll each die that shows a 1 until it shows a different number.

Crimson Eye Action

Prerequisite: Human, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: When you spend an action point, you also subject your *assassin's shroud* target to an additional shroud.

Dawn Hunter Training

Prerequisite: Elf, assassin

Benefit: You can use your *elven accuracy* racial power to reroll a damage roll instead of an attack roll. You must reroll all the dice. Use the higher of the two results.

Emerald Scale Concealment

Prerequisite: Dragonborn, assassin

Benefit: You become invisible to a creature hit by your *dragon breath* racial power until the end of your turn.

Eternal Void Memories

Prerequisite: Deva, assassin

Benefit: When you use your *memory of a thousand lifetimes* racial power to improve an attack roll, the target of that attack roll takes damage equal to your Dexterity modifier, in addition to the attack's other effects.

Grave Dust Advantage

Prerequisite: Assassin, revenant, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: When you use your *dark reaping* racial power, you subject your *assassin's shroud* target to another shroud.

Grave Dust Assassin

Prerequisite: Assassin, revenant, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: When you deal damage with your *dark reaping* racial power, if the target has at least one of your shrouds on it, it takes damage as if you had invoked your shrouds.

Hidden Insight

Prerequisite: Assassin, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: Creatures from which you are hidden are not aware of your shrouds.

Hungry Sky Shadows

Prerequisite: Goliath, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: When you both invoke your shrouds on an enemy and hit it, the enemy takes extra damage equal to your Strength modifier.

Killer's Insight

Prerequisite: Assassin, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: Once per encounter when you use *assassin's shroud*, you can subject the target to two shrouds instead of one.

Mist Walker Illusion

Prerequisite: Gnome, assassin

Benefit: When you hit with a shadow power, you can use your *fade away* racial power as a free action.

Nightmare Killer

Prerequisite: Assassin

Benefit: You gain a +2 feat bonus to damage rolls with fear powers. The bonus increases to +3 at 11th level and +4 at 21st level.

Nightmare Step

Prerequisite: Assassin

Benefit: When you miss a creature with a fear power, you can slide the creature 1 square.

Obsidian Cave Recovery

Prerequisite: Dwarf, assassin, *shade form* power

Benefit: When you use your second wind as a minor action, you regain the use of your *shade form* if you have already used it during this encounter.

Phantom Blade Evasion

Prerequisite: Halfling, assassin, *shadow step* power

Benefit: When you use your *second chance* racial power, you can use *shadow step* as a free action when the attack is resolved.

Scions of Zarak Initiate

Prerequisite: Half-orc, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: When you miss a target but your shrouds still deals damage to it, you can expend your *furious assault* racial power to deal 1d6 extra damage to the target. The damage increases to 1d12 at 11th level.

Shadow Veil Assassin

Prerequisite: Assassin

Benefit: When you hit an adjacent creature with an illusion power that is an encounter or a daily attack power, you can shift 1 square.

Shadow Veil Disappearance

Prerequisite: Assassin

Benefit: When you hit a creature with a melee power that has the illusion keyword, you can make a Stealth check to hide from that creature if you end a move action with cover or concealment against it before the end of your current turn.

Twilight Phantom Step

Prerequisite: Eladrin, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: You can increase the distance of your *fey step* racial power by 5 squares if your destination space is adjacent to your *assassin's shroud* target.

Velvet Blade Trick

Prerequisite: Half-elf, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: Once per encounter, when you use the power granted by your Dilettante racial trait, you subject the target of your *assassin's shroud* power to another shroud after you resolve the attack.

Venom Hand Assassin

Prerequisite: Assassin

Benefit: After a short or an extended rest, pick a weapon you're carrying. The next attack made with that weapon before your next short or extended rest deals 1d8 extra poison damage on a hit. On a miss, the extra damage is lost. The damage increases to 2d8 at 11th level and 3d8 at 21st level.

Venom Hand Killer

Prerequisite: Assassin

Benefit: You gain a +2 feat bonus to poison damage rolls. The bonus increases to +3 at 11th level and +4 at 21st level.

Venom Hand Master

Prerequisite: Assassin

Benefit: Your attacks ignore poison resistance and poison immunity.

Venom Handler

Prerequisite: Assassin, Venom Hand Assassin feat

Benefit: You gain resist 5 poison. The resistance increases to 10 at 11th level and 15 at 21st level.

Minion of the Dark

Prerequisite: 11th level, assassin

Benefit: You gain darkvision.

Nightmare Master

Prerequisite: 11th level, assassin

Benefit: When you hit a creature with a fear power, the creature is dazed until the start of its next turn.

Shadow Initiate [Multiclass Assassin]

Prerequisite: Dex 13

Benefit: You gain training in Stealth.

You can use the *assassin's shroud* power twice per encounter (if a power lets you use *assassin's shroud*, that use does not count against this limit). When you subject a target to your *assassin's shroud*, the shroud ends at the end of your next turn.

In addition, you can wield assassin implements.

About the Author

Mike Mearls is the Lead Designer for the Dungeons & Dragons® roleplaying game. His recent credits include *H1: Keep on the Shadowfell*™ and *Player's Handbook® 2*.

Assassin

Paragon Tier

By Mike Mearls
Illustrations by Emrah Elmasli

The assassin is a killer who has forsaken part of his soul in exchange for the potent power of shadow. Able to tap and manipulate the energy that permeates the Shadowfell, an assassin is a valuable addition to any party of adventurers.

This article is a continuation of the new assassin class, exclusive to *D&D Insider*. What follows are assassin powers, for both the Night Stalker and Bleak Disciple builds, through the paragon tier of play, along with several paragon paths for the assassin.

Level 13 Encounter Hexes

Dark Step Ambush — **Assassin Attack 13**

You step from your foe's shadow to deliver a deadly attack, then hide in the tatters of the foe's soul.

Encounter ✦ Illusion, Shadow, Teleportation, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** 1

Effect: Before the attack, you teleport 5 squares to a square adjacent to your *assassin's shroud* target.

Target: Your *assassin's shroud* target

Attack: Dexterity vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and you become invisible until the end of your next turn.

Flurry of Talons — **Assassin Attack 13**

You fly toward your foe in the shape of a dozen shadows, each winged and fanged. After savaging your foe, you return to your normal form.

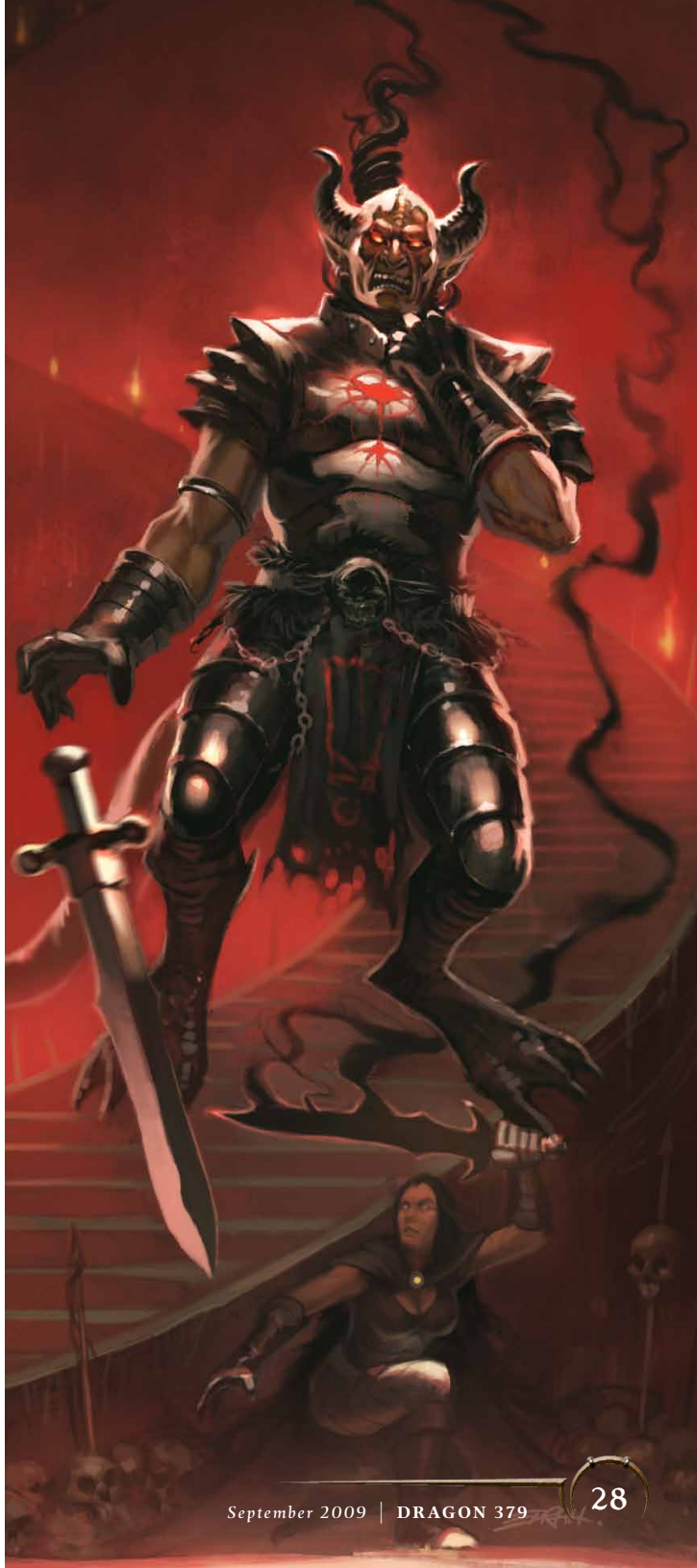
Encounter ✦ Implement, Shadow
Standard Action **Melee** 1

Effect: Before the attack, you fly your speed to a square adjacent to an enemy. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

Target: One enemy

Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex. Make three attack rolls. If any of them hit, resolve them as a single hit, and all of them must miss for the attack to miss.

Hit: 1d8 + Dexterity modifier damage if one of the attack rolls hits, 2d8 + Dexterity modifier damage if two hit, and 3d8 + Dexterity modifier damage if three hit.



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Slayer in the Dark — Assassin Attack 13

Darkness clouds the eyes of your enemy, and you manipulate its fears, causing it to slash in a panic when its allies approach.

Encounter ✦ Fear, Implement, Psychic, Shadow
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 1d10 + Dexterity modifier psychic damage, and the target is blinded until the end of your next turn. Until this blindness ends, you can use an opportunity action to compel the target to make a melee basic attack as a free action against any enemy that enters a square adjacent to the target. The target makes the attack without the penalty to attack rolls from being blinded.
Night Stalker: The target makes the attack with a power bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls equal to your Charisma modifier.

Well of Shades — Assassin Attack 13

Freezing shadows stretch out from you and pull your enemies close before you vanish.

Encounter ✦ Cold, Implement, Shadow, Teleportation
Standard Action **Close** burst 3
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + Dexterity modifier cold damage, and you pull the target 2 squares.
Bleak Disciple: The target is also slowed until the end of your next turn.
Effect: You either teleport 5 squares or become invisible until the end of your next turn.

Level 15 Daily Hexes

Bleak Gallows — Assassin Attack 15

Shadows coalesce into a black gallows, and a noose of force drops around your foe's neck.

Daily ✦ Conjuration, Force, Implement, Shadow, Teleportation
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d6 + Dexterity modifier force damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You conjure a gallows in an unoccupied square adjacent to the target. The gallows occupies its square, and it lasts until the end of the encounter. The gallows can be attacked and has 35 hit points. Until the gallows vanishes, you can use a free action to teleport the target to a square adjacent to the gallows at the end of each of the target's turns.

Death's Doorstep — Assassin Attack 15

As your weapon strikes your foe, you open a channel from your tainted shadow into its soul, making it easier to shroud it and tear it to shreds.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever you attack the target and invoke your shrouds on it, a shroud is not subtracted if that attack misses.

Shade Venom — Assassin Attack 15

Your weapon becomes covered with a translucent, gray poison. When you strike your foe, the poison gives life to your foe's shadow, turning it into a malevolent beast.

Daily ✦ Poison, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier poison damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The target is affected by your shade venom (save ends). Until this effect ends, you can use an opportunity action at the start of each of the target's turns to compel it to make a melee basic attack against itself with combat advantage. The target can make a saving throw against this effect only on a turn during which it hit itself with the melee basic attack.

Sundered Shadow — Assassin Attack 15

You slice into your foe's shadow and grasp it. Now your foe cannot escape your attacks.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. Until the end of the encounter, you gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls against the target, and you can make melee attacks against the target even when it is beyond your melee reach.
Miss: Half damage. Until the end of your next turn, you can make melee attacks against the target even when it is beyond your melee reach.

Level 16 Utility Hexes

Assassin's Defense — Assassin Utility 16

Infused with your umbral magic, your foe's shadow betrays the foe, giving away its attack a split second beforehand so that you can vanish.

Encounter ✦ Illusion, Shadow
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: Your *assassin's shroud* target hits you
Effect: You gain a +2 power bonus to all defenses against the triggering enemy's attack. After the attack is resolved, you become invisible until the end of your next turn.

Liquid Shadow — Assassin Utility 16

As your foe strikes, you become a creature of shadow and then pursue that enemy.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Teleportation
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy hits you
Effect: You take half damage from the attack. At the end of the triggering enemy's current turn, you can use a free action to teleport to a square adjacent to it.

Shadow Meld — Assassin Utility 16

You vanish into your own shadow.

Daily ✦ Shadow
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You shift 2 squares. Until the start of your next turn, enemies cannot attack you, and they have neither line of sight nor line of effect to you.

Thief of Names — Assassin Utility 16

You peer into the Shadowfell, draw forth the shade of a creature, and craft its shadow stuff into a disguise.

Daily ✦ Illusion, Shadow
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Choose a Medium or smaller humanoid creature that you have seen. You become an illusory duplicate of that creature, though you still carry your own gear. This illusion lasts until you end it as a free action or until your next extended rest. You gain a +5 power bonus to Bluff checks to convince others that you are the creature.

If you take damage from a melee or a ranged attack while you are adjacent to the creature, you take only half damage, and the creature takes the same amount of damage. You gain this benefit neither against the creature's attacks nor against attacks that target both of you.

Level 17 Encounter Hexes

Mob of Shadows — Assassin Attack 17

You slice your foe's shadow to pieces. Each piece forms a miniature copy of you and stands next to the foe, weapon poised.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon, Zone
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. The attack creates a zone that fills the squares adjacent to the target. The zone lasts until the end of your next turn. When any enemy enters the zone, you can use an opportunity action to deal damage to that enemy equal to your Dexterity modifier. If you do so, that enemy is slowed until the end of your next turn.

Bleak Disciple: Add your Constitution modifier to the damage dealt by the zone.

Shadow Fire — Assassin Attack 17

You stab at your foe three times, and each strike creates an inky blot on it that erupts into flickering, ebony flares.

Encounter ✦ Fire, Illusion, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC. Make three attack rolls. If any of them hit, resolve them as a single hit, and all of them must miss for the attack to miss.
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier fire damage if one of the attack rolls hits, 2[W] + Dexterity modifier fire damage if two hit, and 3[W] + Dexterity modifier fire damage if three hit. In addition, you become invisible until the end of your next turn.

Shadowed Deception — Assassin Attack 17

In your foe's eyes, you take on a form so terrifying that you cow it utterly.

Encounter ✦ Fear, Implement, Psychic, Shadow
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 3d10 + Dexterity modifier psychic damage, and the target cannot attack you until the end of your next turn.

Night Stalker: The target also grants combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Traitorous Shadow — Assassin Attack 17

Your foe's shadow writhes as it gains a malevolent will of its own. The moment the foe drops its guard, the shadow strikes.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. During the target's next turn, the target falls prone after moving without shifting or after making a ranged or an area attack.

Level 19 Daily Hexes

Consign to Shadow — Assassin Attack 19

Your attack taints your enemy with the essence of the Shadowfell and creates a bond between you two, which causes you both to fade away for a few moments.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Teleportation, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You create a shadow bond that lasts until the end of your next turn. Until the bond ends, both you and the target become insubstantial to every combatant but each other, the target's allies don't have line of effect to it, and you can use a move action to teleport to a square adjacent to the target.
Sustain Minor: The shadow bond persists. You can sustain the bond only if the target has at least 1 hit point.

Executioner's Blade — Assassin Attack 19

Having studied your foe, you are ready to deliver a killing blow. Your foe might dodge or parry your strike, but in the end, it cannot escape you.

Daily ✦ Reliable, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: Your *assassin's shroud* target
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 5[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Effect: If you invoked your shrouds on the target as part of this attack, a shroud is not subtracted if the attack misses.

Guild of Shadows — Assassin Attack 19

Three ebon duplicates of yourself appear, eager to aid you in slaying your foes.

Daily ✦ Conjuration, Implement, Shadow
Minor Action **Close** burst 5
Effect: You conjure three shadowy duplicates of yourself in 3 unoccupied squares in the burst. The duplicates occupy their spaces, and they last until the end of your next turn. Whenever you use a move action, you can also move each duplicate 5 squares. You can flank enemies with the duplicates, but your allies cannot. Any enemy that starts its turn adjacent to one or more of the duplicates takes 5 damage.
Sustain Minor: The duplicates persist, and each one makes the following melee attack against a different creature.
Target: One creature adjacent to the duplicate
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 5 + Dexterity modifier damage.

Phantom Assault — Assassin Attack 19

With each of your blows, shadows flit around your enemy, distracting it and allowing you to remain hidden from its sight.

Daily ✦ Illusion, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 4[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You become invisible to the target until the end of your next turn. In addition, whenever you hit the target with a shadow attack before the end of the encounter, you become invisible to it until the end of your next turn.

Paragon Paths

Obsidian Stalker

"Walls, guards, and beasts—none of these things can prevent me from reaching my target."

Prerequisite: Assassin

You are a hunting phantom, an assassin who excels at using shadow magic to slip past the tightest defenses. Once you have chosen to slay a creature, no barrier can prevent you from reaching it.

This assassin's tradition traces its origin to the Obsidian Cave assassins' guild, an ancient dwarven order that specialized in hunting down and killing Underdark monsters. Initiates of the Obsidian Cave were tasked with finding and killing mind flayers, drow priestesses, and others that sought to attack the surface world. With such preventative attacks, the dwarves ensured that their mines remained safe. Since that time, the hunting phantom's techniques have passed to assassins from different traditions.

Obsidian Stalker Path Features

Stalker's Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you also gain phasing and become insubstantial until the end of your next turn.

Stalker's Form (11th level): While insubstantial, you gain a +5 bonus to all defenses against opportunity attacks. Also, once per day when you use *shade form*, you gain phasing until the end of your next turn.

Stalker's Tread (16th level): You can move through enemies' spaces.

Obsidian Stalker Hexes

Blade from the Mist Obsidian Stalker Attack 11

You step into sight as you attack, catching your foe unprepared for your assault.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. If the target couldn't see you at the start of your turn, the attack deals extra damage equal to your Charisma modifier.
Effect: Before or after the attack, you shift your speed, and you gain phasing during the shift.

Hunter's Eye Obsidian Stalker Utility 12

Once you have chosen a foe, it cannot escape you.

Daily ✦ Shadow
Minor Action **Ranged** 10
Target: Your *assassin's shroud* target
Effect: Until you use this power on a different enemy, you gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls against the target, and you can take a standard action to determine the distance and direction to the target, ignoring all barriers. If the target is on a different plane from you, you know which plane but gain no other information about the target's location.

Grasp of the Obsidian Tomb Obsidian Stalker Attack 20

Shadows grasp and pull at the target, holding it in place as you prepare to deliver the final blow.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One enemy
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 4[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The target is immobilized and cannot teleport (save ends both). In addition, you use your *assassin's shroud* up to four times against the target.

Shadowblade

"The dark is my weapon."

Prerequisite: Assassin

You are a shadowblade, an assassin capable of crafting the raw stuff of the night into a deadly weapon. At your command, the shadows twist and sway. With a gesture, you can craft a shadowblade, a weapon of pure darkness that is as sharp as any blade of steel. As long as a shadow is near you, you are never unarmed.

With your shadowblade, you can slice the raw stuff of a foe's shadow. With each cut, you extract part of that essence, and at a foe's death you can infuse that shadow with a magical effect. At your command, the shadows you have harvested appear as looming shades to distract a foe, swirl around you to shield you from sight, or reach forth like hungry apparitions to douse torches and lanterns.

Shadowblade Path Features

Weapon of the Night (11th level): As a minor action, you can create a shadowblade. It is a light blade with the light thrown property, a +3 proficiency bonus, 1d8 damage, and a range of 5/10. You are proficient in its use. The shadowblade disappears if you are not touching it at the end of your turn.

Master of Shadows (11th level): When you reduce any enemy to 0 hit points with your shadowblade, you gain a gloom shard. As a minor action, you can expend a gloom shard to gain one of the following effects.

- ✦ You gain combat advantage against an adjacent enemy until the end of your turn.
- ✦ You gain a +5 bonus to the next Stealth check you make this turn.
- ✦ You douse a light source until the end of your next turn. The light source must be within 10 squares of you and must be no larger than a lantern.

You can have up to five gloom shards at a time. After an extended rest, your unexpended gloom shards vanish, but you gain a gloom shard.

Shadowblade Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you gain combat advantage for all your attacks until the end of your turn, and as your last action of the turn, you can teleport 10 squares as a free action.

Eyes of the Night (16th level): You gain darkvision.

Shadowblade Hexes

Soul Reaver — Shadowblade Attack 11

Your shadowblade bites deeply into your foe, cutting through flesh, soul, and shadow.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC, or Dexterity vs. Reflex if you make this attack with your shadowblade.
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and you gain a gloom shard.

Veil of Unsight — Shadowblade Utility 12

Shadows swirl around you, making you or an ally impossible to see.

Encounter ✦ Illusion, Shadow
Minor Action **Melee** touch
Target: You or one ally
Effect: The target becomes invisible until the end of your next turn.

Shadow Curse — Shadowblade Attack 20

You utter a dark curse upon your foe as you strike it. At your bidding, the shadows you have carved from your enemies leap on that foe like rabid dogs.

Daily ✦ Necrotic, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC, or Dexterity vs. Reflex if you make this attack with your shadowblade.
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you can expend a gloom shard once per turn as a minor action to deal 5 + your Dexterity modifier necrotic damage to the target and gain combat advantage against it until the end of your turn.

Soul Thief

"Its body is dead, but I'm only getting started on its soul."

Prerequisite: Assassin

You are a soul thief, an assassin trained in a killing art created by the drow. To the drow, death is merely a release from the horrid torments they can inflict on the body and mind. Soul thieves learn shadow magic techniques that allow them to capture a creature's spirit before it escapes to the afterlife. The soul suffers in agony within this state between life and death, its torment ending only when you use it to fuel your hexes.

Soul Thief Path Features

Soul Theft (11th level): When you reduce any enemy to 0 hit points, you gain a soul shard. You can expend a soul shard as a free action either to subject your *assassin's shroud* target to another shroud or to gain a +1 bonus to a single attack roll, saving throw, skill check, or ability check. Alternatively, you can expend three soul shards as a free action to regain the use of *shade form*.

You can have up to five soul shards at a time. After an extended rest, your unexpended soul shards vanish, but you gain a soul shard.

Soul Thief's Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you gain a bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls until the end of your turn. The bonus equals 2 + the number of soul shards you currently have.

Soul Killer (11th level): A creature killed by you cannot be restored to life except by a creature of a level higher than yours.

Soul Reaper (16th level): When any enemy within 3 squares of you drops to 0 hit points, you gain a soul shard as a free action.

Soul Thief Hexes

Soul Shadow — Soul Thief Attack 11

Infused with shadow magic, your weapon slashes into your enemy's very soul.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Special: You can expend a soul shard to prevent the attack roll from ending your *shade form*.

Stalking Phantom — Soul Thief Utility 12

You move like a ghost, passing through your enemies.

At-Will ✦ Shadow
Move Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be under the effect of *shade form*.
Effect: You shift your speed and can move through enemies' spaces during the shift.

Final Ending — Soul Thief Attack 20

The souls you have captured scream in agony as your shadow consumes them to lend power to this attack.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you can expend a soul shard once per round as a free action to gain a +2 bonus to a single attack roll against the target.
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 5[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.

Venomed Soul

"One cut is all I need to end your life."

Prerequisite: Assassin

You are a venomed soul, a student of an ancient text called *The Book of All Venoms*. Zehir wrote this book at the dawn of creation, and within its pages he outlined the invention of every poison that is, was, and ever shall be. Over the centuries, several thieves have stolen fragments of the book, from adventurers desperate to find a poison's antidote to ambitious slayers eager to unleash poison so powerful that even Zehir balked at crafting them.

Venomed Soul Path Features

Poisoned Soul (11th level): You gain resist 5 poison. The resistance increases to 10 at 21st level.

Master of Poisons (11th level): Whenever you take a short or an extended rest, you can poison one of your weapons or a piece of ammunition. Choose one of the poison effects given below. The next time you attack with the poisoned item before your next short or extended rest, the target suffers the chosen effect if the attack hits. The effect is lost if the attack misses.

- ✦ The target takes extra poison damage equal to 5 + your Constitution modifier.
- ✦ The target is immobilized until the end of your next turn.
- ✦ Until the end of your next turn, the target cannot see any creature more than 4 squares from it.

Venomous Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you gain a bonus to attack rolls equal to your Constitution modifier against enemies taking ongoing poison damage. The bonus lasts until the end of your next turn. In addition, you can apply a Master of Poisons effect to one of your weapons or a piece of ammunition.

Persistent Venom (16th level): The poison effect of your Master of Poisons is no longer lost on a miss. Instead the first target hit by the poisoned item suffers the effect.

Venomed Soul Hexes

Inescapable Venom **Venomed Soul Attack 11**

A green mist flows from your weapon as you strike your enemy. Using your shadow magic, you leave even the undead vulnerable to your poisons.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target gains vulnerable 5 poison until the end of your next turn.

Venomous Kiss **Venomed Soul Utility 12**

With a flick of your wrist, you douse your weapon with a deadly venom.

Encounter ✦ Poison, Shadow
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Choose one weapon you're carrying. The next time you hit a target with that weapon before the end of your next turn, the target takes 2d6 extra poison damage.

Soul Venom **Venomed Soul Attack 20**

You send a venomous hex into the wound you create. As long as you keep the eye of death on this foe, the venom does its deadly work.

Daily ✦ Poison, Shadow
Minor Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Effect: Once before the end of the encounter, when you hit the target with a weapon attack, you can cause the target to take ongoing 15 poison damage (save ends). While the target is your *assassin's shroud* target, it takes a -5 penalty to saving throws against this ongoing damage.

About the Author

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Assassin
Epic Tier

By Mike Mearls
Illustrations by Emrah Elmasli

As an assassin gains more power, the Shadowfell's draw on her soul becomes ever stronger. In exchange, she gains access to greater manipulations of shadow. Few can find an epic assassin unless she wants to be found, but few would want to.

This article is a continuation of the new assassin class, exclusive to *D&D Insider*. What follows are assassin powers, for both the Night Stalker and Bleak Disciple builds, through the epic tier of play, along with a new epic destiny for the assassin.

Level 22 Utility Hexes

Assassin's Eye — Assassin Utility 22

Shadows briefly guide your attacks, ensuring that no hindrance can stop your hexes from reaching your enemies.

Encounter ✦ Shadow
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, you ignore penalties to your attack rolls and damage rolls, and you ignore the weakened condition and your targets' resistances.

Claim the Dead — Assassin Utility 22

As your foe's soul passes to the Shadowfell, you drain a portion of its essence for your own use.

Encounter ✦ Healing, Shadow
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You reduce your *assassin's shroud* target to 0 hit points on your turn
Effect: You can spend a healing surge and regain 15 additional hit points. In addition, you gain an extra move action that you can use during either this turn or your next turn.

Fortress of Shadow — Assassin Utility 22

Darkness swirls around you, shielding you from your foes' eyes.

Daily ✦ Illusion, Shadow
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You become invisible until the end of your next turn.
Sustain Minor: The invisibility persists.

Soul of Death — Assassin Utility 22

Having nearly touched death, you become an avatar of the killer's art.

Daily ✦ Healing, Shadow
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You drop to 0 hit points or fewer
Effect: You regain hit points as if you had spent a healing surge. In addition, you use your *assassin's shroud* up to four times against an enemy you can see.

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Level 23 Encounter Hexes

Cruel Shadows — Assassin Attack 23

Your attack bends and twists your enemy's shadow, causing it to terrify that enemy.

Encounter ✦ Fear, Psychic, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier psychic damage. Until the end of your next turn, you can slide the target 3 squares as a free action when any creature ends its turn adjacent to the target.
Night Stalker: The target also grants combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Obsidian Spiders — Assassin Attack 23

With a gesture, you cause the shadows around your foes to transform into black spiders, which swarm over them and deliver dozens of poisonous bites.

Encounter ✦ Implement, Poison, Shadow
Standard Action **Area** burst 1 within 10 squares
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude. If the target is your *assassin's shroud* target, you gain a +2 bonus to the attack roll.
Hit: 3d8 + Dexterity modifier poison damage.

Shadow Swap — Assassin Attack 23

As you strike at your foe, your shadows mingle.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. The next time you are subjected to an effect that a save can end before the end of your next turn, the target is also subjected to that effect.
Bleak Disciple: When the target is subjected to the effect that a save can end, the target takes damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Wraith's Assault — Assassin Attack 23

You move through your enemies like a shadow, advancing on your chosen foe despite the defenses around it.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Effect: Before the attack, you fly your speed + 4, and you gain phasing and become insubstantial during the movement.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.

Level 25 Daily Hexes

Assassin's Scalpel — Assassin Attack 25

You ready the perfect attack to slay your foe, confident that you can score the killing blow under the right circumstances.

Daily ✦ Reliable, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC. You can score a critical hit on a roll of 18–20. After making the attack roll, you can turn the attack into a miss.
Hit: 6[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.

Folded Shadow — Assassin Attack 25

As you lunge at your enemy, your blade slices deep into it, and you disappear into its shadow.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** 1
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 5[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You shift 1 square into the target's space and remain there until the end of your next turn. While there, you are insubstantial, you move with the target (this movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks), and any melee or ranged attack that misses you hits the target instead, unless the target is the attacker. When the effect ends, you slide 1 square to a square adjacent to the target.
Sustain Minor: The effect persists.

Reaper's Touch — Assassin Attack 25

With an innocuous tap, you place an echo of death energy into your foe's body and soul.

Daily ✦ Implement, Necrotic, Shadow
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: Ongoing 25 necrotic damage (save ends).
Aftereffect: Ongoing 15 necrotic damage (save ends).
Miss: Ongoing 15 necrotic damage (save ends).
Aftereffect: Ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends).
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever you hit the target with a shadow attack, it takes a -5 penalty to saving throws against this power's ongoing damage until the end of your next turn.

Wall of Death — Assassin Attack 25

You call forth a shadowy construct built from the shards of your previous victims. It howls in pain and lashes out with long tendrils as the souls trapped within seek to escape.

Daily ✦ Conjuration, Implement, Necrotic, Shadow
Standard Action **Area** wall 5 within 10 squares
Effect: You conjure a wall of darkness that lasts until the end of your next turn. The wall can be up to 4 squares high, and it blocks line of sight for creatures other than you. Any enemy that starts its turn in the wall or adjacent to it takes 15 necrotic damage, plus 5 damage for each of your shrouds on that enemy. Whenever a creature drops to 0 hit points or fewer within 5 squares of the wall, the wall's length can increase by 2 squares.
Sustain Minor: The wall persists.

Level 27 Encounter Hexes

Ambush from Thin Air — Assassin Attack 27

You appear suddenly next to your foe and make a deadly attack.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Teleportation, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** 1
Effect: Before the attack, you teleport 20 squares to a square adjacent to your *assassin's shroud* target. This teleportation does not require line of sight.
Target: Your *assassin's shroud* target
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.

Last Word — Assassin Attack 27

Having studied your enemy, you are now ready to end its life with a single strike.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: Your *assassin's shroud* target
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Effect: If you invoked your shrouds on the target as part of the attack, roll d12s instead of d6s for that damage.

Reaper in Black — Assassin Attack 27

In your foe's eyes, you become an avatar of death. Your presence is enough to hold the foe rapt with fear, and your other enemies sense that creature's impending doom.

Encounter ✦ Fear, Implement, Psychic, Shadow
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 3d10 + Dexterity modifier psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of your next turn. In addition, you slide each enemy within 5 squares of the target 1 square.
Night Stalker: The number of squares you slide each enemy equals 3.

Shadows of Doom — Assassin Attack 27

Your foe's shadow writhes as it gains a malevolent will of its own. It strikes the moment your foe lets its guard down.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. Until the end of your next turn, the target takes 3 damage each time it takes any action other than a free action.
Bleak Disciple: The target instead takes damage equal to your Constitution modifier each time it takes any action other than a free action.

Level 29 Daily Hexes

Doom Foretold — Assassin Attack 29

As your weapon slices your foe, you lay bare the root of its doom. Your next strike is the last one you'll need.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 7[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You use your *assassin's shroud* against the target up to four times.

Intent to Murder — Assassin Attack 29

You have studied your foe long enough. Now is the time to end its life.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One enemy that has four of your shrouds on it
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: Damage equal to your bloodied value, or twice that if the target is helpless.
Miss: Damage equal to your healing surge value, or twice that if the target is helpless.

Shadow Puppet — Assassin Attack 29

You reach into your foe's shadow and rip away part of its essence, which you use to manipulate the foe like a puppet.

Daily ✦ Charm, Implement, Psychic, Shadow
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 4d8 + Dexterity modifier psychic damage, and the target is dominated (save ends). Until the target saves against this effect, when any enemy leaves a square adjacent to the target or makes a ranged attack while adjacent to it, you can use an opportunity action to compel the target to make a melee basic attack as a free action against that enemy.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is dominated until the end of your next turn.

Three Shadow Venoms — Assassin Attack 29

You draw the essence of shadow into your weapon and transform it into a deadly mixture of three poisons.

Daily ✦ Poison, Shadow, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target is weakened (save ends) and takes ongoing 15 poison damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target takes a –5 penalty to damage rolls (save ends) and takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).
Effect: The target is dazed (save ends).

Epic Destiny

Perfect Slayer

An immortal is fated to die, and you are the bearer of that being's fate.

Prerequisite: 21st level, assassin

You were sent by the Raven Queen to slay a great threat to the cosmos, one that could unravel the very foundation of the planes. Though the Raven Queen is the mistress of death, she is usually content to allow each creature to find its death as its fate decrees. When death and misery spread on too wide a scale against the natural order, to the point when all life is threatened, a Perfect Slayer arises at her command.

As a Perfect Slayer, this might be your first incarnation as a mortal or one of many uncounted iterations. Your prior memories are misty at best, and you have only the barest understanding of the threat you have been dispatched to defeat. Perhaps you knew of the threat from the earliest days you practiced the assassin's art, but you might not have uncovered your quarry's true identity until you attained the heights of your power. You learn of your destiny only when your mistress deems it necessary. Legend holds that some day, the Raven Queen herself shall die on the blade of a Perfect Slayer. Perhaps that is the reason for her secrecy.

Your life has been an endless chase, but now the pursuit nears its end. Will you slay your quarry, or will you die in the attempt?

Immortality

What is immortality to one fated to end the life of an immortal being? You exist solely to ensure that a great threat to the cosmos dies. Once your task is done, then you can rest.

Inevitable Doom: Death will someday come for you, just as it came to your victims. For you, however, death is by no means an end. You might slumber for eons, but if a great threat again manifests against the foundations of reality, the Raven Queen might once more release you into the world.

Perfect Slayer Features

Lord of Battle (21st level): You have combat advantage against any enemy that has at least one of your shrouds on it.

Perfect Form (21st level): Your Dexterity score increases by 2.

Blooded but Unbowed (24th level): When you drop to 0 hit points or fewer, you remain conscious until the end of your next turn if any enemy has at least one of your shrouds on it, and if you reduce your *assassin's shroud* target to 0 hit points before the end of your next turn, you regain hit points as if you had spent a healing surge.

Perfect Killer (30th level): Your shrouds do not disappear when you invoke them, unless you want them to.

Perfect Slayer Power

Killer's Judgment — **Perfect Slayer Utility 26**

With a quick study, you unlock all of your foe's weaknesses.

Encounter ✦ Shadow
Minor Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One enemy
Effect: You use your *assassin's shroud* against the target, subjecting it to up to four shrouds instead of one. The next time you invoke your shrouds on the target before the end of your next turn, the shrouds deal maximum damage to the target.

About the Author

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Warden Essentials

By Tavis Allison and Eytan Bernstein
Illustrations by Brandon Leach, Empty Room Studios

"The first guardians of this forest were peasants, before they were levied into the armies of Nerath. They received billhooks and glaives because these weapons cost less than a sword and were more effective in untrained hands. Those who survived brought these weapons back to the forest, where they found the training that the collapsing empire had neglected. They learned to revere life, to draw strength from the growing world, and to stand fast. When they walked through these woods, they held their polearms high so that the curved blades would shine forth like a crescent moon for all to see. Those who belong here could see an ally was on the way, and invaders knew fear when looking upon these blades. That's what it means to be a warden."

~ Cadifor of the Wild Wood

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One of the joys Dungeons & Dragons® offers is the ability to play a hero of legend. Throughout human history, one of the times that people have most needed to create the legend of a hero is when a culture defined by their kinship to their natural environment must defend it against an expansionist outsider. These warriors drew upon their myths and their courage to confront the heavier armament of the invaders. This archetype also thrives in the worlds of fantasy, and the warden offers players the chance to become a hero who brings this legacy to life. Understanding how a warden functions is essential to creating and playing a character who lives up to its legendary heritage while helping the party create a new set of legends.

The Basics

"When the goodfolk of the woods are in trouble they hang a silver crescent from the highest bough in memory of those who protected them after Nerath could not. Sometimes you'll see it and come in time to help them. Sometimes it'll work like a scarecrow to run off their foes. And sometimes not. Then it's your job to avenge what was done so thoroughly that the next interloper will think long and hard about harming a creature that's raised the crescent sign."

~ Dyfan of the Wild Wood

You have a wealth of tools to build an effective warden, from the race you choose to the magic items you seek. All these different paths lead to the same goal. You must prevent your foes from getting past you to the softer targets among your allies, and you need to become sufficiently resilient that you can take more punishment than anyone else in the party without going down. Your class features help you with both aspects of this job.

Not So Fast: Marking

Marking is your fundamental tool in forcing your enemies to attack you even when they'd rather be going after your friends. Learning how and when to mark a target is essential for all defenders, and the warden is no exception. To master the warden's role, you need to understand the unique class features that relate to marking: Nature's Wrath, which is how you mark enemies, and the powers *warden's fury* and *warden's grasp*, which are how you punish foes that disobey your mark and attack someone else. First, however, you need to remember the universals.

Marking 101

✦ *A marked target has a harder time hitting your allies.* Your mark imposes a –2 penalty to attack rolls when the marked enemy's attack doesn't include you as a target. Since your defenses are frequently a few points higher than the rest of your party's, the foe you mark might be frustrated to discover that it makes every one of your allies at least as hard to hit as you are. However, keep in mind that your mark doesn't protect your friends if an enemy can hit both you and your allies with the same attack. When fighting a foe that uses lots of area and close attacks, focus on tactical positioning to keep your allies out of reach of an effect that could hit you.

✦ *Marking says "hit me."* As a warden, you might be tempted to mark multiple enemies every round. Before you do, be sure that you're ready to be hit by every one of those foes. You can help avoid that worst-case scenario by making sure your defenses are as high as possible. If you've built your warden to max out your hit points and healing surges, at first it might be easy for you to soak all the hits you take. Nevertheless, think twice when you're far enough below bloodied that you'd drop if every marked enemy hits you. Also, be careful about marking when your healing resources are running low. It's true that your job is to draw attacks, but it's an inefficient use of your party's resources if you're the only one who is spending healing surges in an encounter. If you're typically the one calling for a rest because you're tapped out while others have plenty of surges left, it's time to step back on your marking and allow other melee characters take their share of the hits.

✦ *Only one mark at a time can apply to a target.* If you mark an enemy that has already been marked by one of your allies, you replace his or her mark with yours. Unless it's obvious that your friend has bitten off more than he or she can chew, it's a good idea to talk it over before you replace the mark. (Talking it over can also provide you with a good opportunity to show the way your character thinks and speaks. With a little effort, coordination among characters can enhance the fun and drama of an exciting fight scene instead of disrupting the players' immersion.)

Nature's Wrath

As a warden, you use Nature's Wrath to mark foes. Here are the things you should know about this fundamental class feature:

✦ *It's a free action.* One thing this means is that you can use Nature's Wrath at any point in your turn, including midway through another action such as a move or a charge. Another is that you can take a full turn's worth of standard, move, and minor actions without giving up your ability to mark.

✦ *You must be adjacent.* Even if your offense is being delivered by a reach weapon or a distance attack, at some point in your turn you need to be next to an enemy if you want to use Nature's Wrath.

✦ *Only once, during your turn.* You can use most free actions during another player's turn, but Nature's Wrath is an exception. And although you might like to mark one group of enemies and then move to mark another, you can't unless you have a feat or power that grants an exception to the once-per-turn limit.

✦ *You can mark, but you don't have to.* If multiple enemies are adjacent to you, you can choose to mark some of them but not others. Combined with the fact that you don't have to attack the target you marked, this gives you great flexibility when you're working with another defender. You can focus fire on the target that your ally is attacking without disrupting your ally's mark, and still mark any other adjacent enemies to keep them stuck on you.

Enforcing Your Mark

What happens when you mark a foe, but they disobey and attack someone else? As with any other defender, when you mark an enemy you make it harder for it to hit your allies. You can also punish an enemy who disobeys your mark with the powers you receive as class features: *warden's fury* and *warden's grasp*. Which one you use depends on your tactical positioning. Because both of these are immediate actions, you can deliver only one punishment each round. Marking more than one enemy is useful because it increases the chances that one of them provokes your punishment, and also because the penalty to attack rolls applies to any number of marked creatures.

Warden's Fury

A strike with *warden's fury* is your most effective tool for persuading a marked enemy that it should have attacked you instead. As a weapon attack against a non-AC defense, *warden's fury* is especially likely to hit, and as a damaging immediate interrupt you have a chance to drop an offender that's low on hit points before it can even finish attacking your friend. Even if a hit with *warden's fury* doesn't take its target down, it does create combat advantage to make it easier for you and your allies to kill your enemy with successive attacks.

The fundamental limitation of *warden's fury* as a deterrent is that it works only if the enemy is within reach of your weapon when it attacks your ally. Increasing your reach is one way to keep foes from shifting 1 square away so that it can target your friends with impunity. Another is to limit the enemy's mobility so that it can't move out of your weapon range. Fortunately, being a warden gives you many tools to help you achieve these solutions.

Warden's Grasp

Your other option for punishing a villain that disobeys your mark is *warden's grasp*, which offers two important advantages. The first is that it works at a greater range—up to 5 squares away. Although that's not so far that an enemy couldn't move to avoid any punishment you can deliver, many cases exist in which *warden's grasp* allows you to take revenge on a foe that's out of *warden's fury* range. The second reason to use *warden's grasp* is that it slides, slows, and prevents its target from shifting as an automatic effect—no attack roll required. Sometimes you might choose to use the power because the guaranteed ability to reposition a foe and limit its mobility is more useful than the chance of dealing damage. Consider this option when you know your target has plenty of hit points, or when you see an opportunity to slide it someplace it would rather not be. Another time to choose *warden's grasp* is when you're having a hard time hitting that target, either because it has fantastic defenses or because you have an attack penalty. Finally, because *warden's grasp* doesn't require an attack roll, you might choose this reaction to avoid triggering effects that happen on an attack. The flip side of this, unfortunately, is that you can't use it to claim effects that happen on a hit, such as many of the bonuses granted by a bard's powers.

Keeping Enemies on You

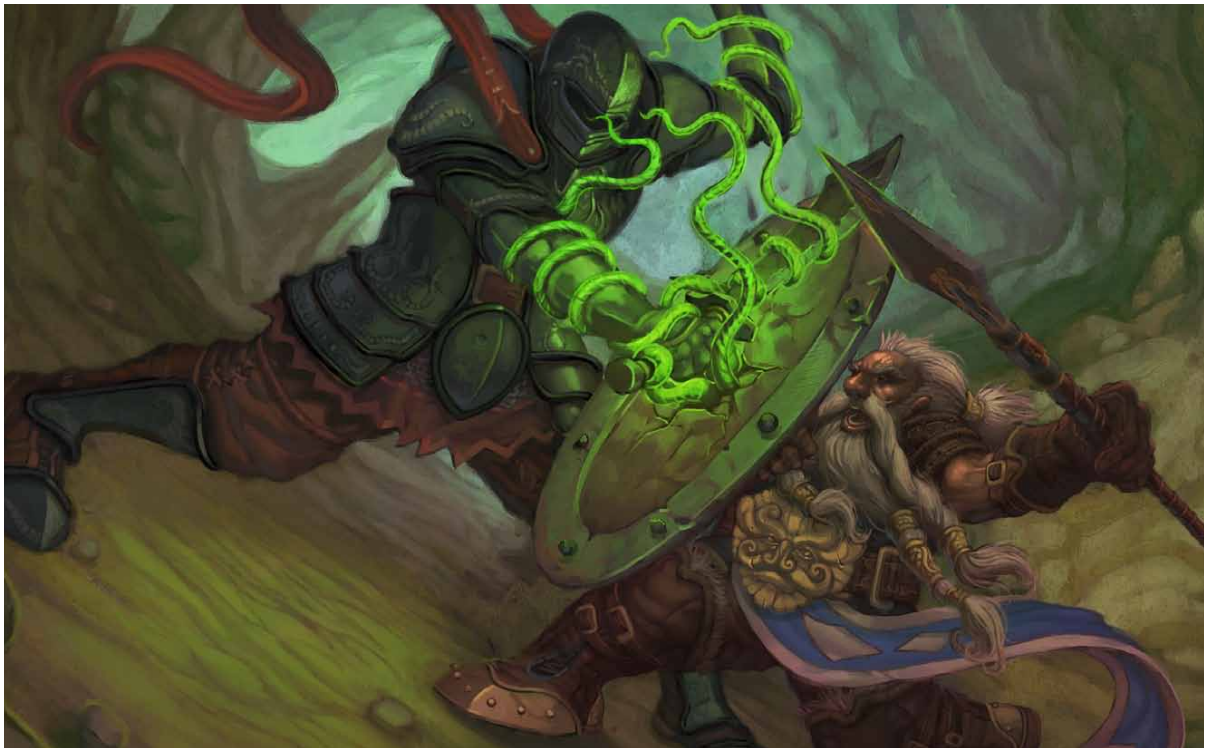
The good news about being a warden is that it's easy to mark many different enemies. The bad news is that compared to a fighter's Combat Superiority and Combat Challenge, you have a harder time keeping marked foes from slipping away from you, and because your ability to punish enemies who attack

your friends is relatively short-range, it's considerably easier for foes to avoid than a paladin's *divine challenge* or the aegis powers of a swordmage. What you have instead is a wealth of options for limiting your foes' ability to move away from you. Using these well requires attention to tactics, but in the right combination, they can make fighting a warden as painful as escaping from a briar patch.

Slowing foes is an effective way of keeping them away from your friends. All wardens have some slowing ability with *warden's grasp*, and you can enhance this dimension of stickiness from first level. The *weight of earth* at-will lets you slow the foe you attack, and the Sudden Roots feat does the same for those who provoke an opportunity attack. Once slowed, a marked enemy is going to have a hard time getting out of reach of your grasp. Adding difficult terrain can make slow nearly as good as immobilize. Look for opportunities to corner enemies in areas of difficult terrain whenever you can, and consider powers such as *hungry earth* and *form of winter's herald* that allow you to create areas of your own. Finally, you should try to position yourself in bottlenecks where the features of the battlefield help keep your enemies and your allies separate. You might choose powers that allow you to force enemy movement to put it on the wrong side of such bottlenecks, and delay or ready actions in combat so that you can take turns letting others strike through a bottleneck before you step up and plug it again. When the battlefield doesn't provide a bottleneck, look for ways to use walls and well-defended teammates to make sure that you can use *warden's* fury to hit the only squares from which your opponents would be tempted to attack your friends.

Stand Tall: Second Wind and Saving Throws

If you're playing your role to the fullest, your warden will be taking more attacks than anyone else in the party. That's as it should be! Your high defenses should ensure that fewer of those attacks hit, and when they do you have class features that allow you to take it without needing to call for help from your leader. The first of these is Font of Life, which gives you a chance to shrug off a condition that a save can end before it can even affect you. The second is your Guardian Might, which adds an extra effect to your second wind. Although your build, and the feats it lets you choose, determines various aspects of how you employ extra effects, all wardens rely on second wind for some aspects of their role. The first is survivability. When you're within a few hits of going down, you might have to give up an attack for the healing second wind provides, but if you're knocked unconscious you lose considerably more attack potential! Impregnability is another benefit of second wind for a warden. A good tactic is to move into the thick of the enemy, mark them all, and then pump your defenses with second wind so that all the attacks you draw bounce right off. Second wind is useful enough for a warden that, like your encounter attack powers, you should expect to use it in each fight, and plan when to do so for maximum effectiveness.



Warden Builds

The *Player's Handbook 2* describes how the different types of warden are distinguished by their choice of class feature and their favored secondary attribute. If you're attracted to playing a certain race, it's easy enough to decide that gaining a racial bonus to Constitution means that you should be an earth warden, while a boost to Wisdom leads to a wild warden. The differences in play style between the warden builds are less obvious, because they emerge from the Guardian Might class feature and the riders on the build's encounter attack powers.

Earth Warden

"Stone is the bone of the forest. I draw strength from that hidden solidity as I roam the woods that cover these hills and mountains, protecting the gateways to the holdfasts of my clan."

~ Kentigern, dwarf crescent guardian

Earthstrength: Be Invincible

As an earth warden, your choice of the Earthstrength class feature combines with your high Constitution modifier to push your defenses sky-high when you use second wind. Given this ability to become nearly invulnerable once per encounter, enemies avoid confront you unless they have no other choice. Fittingly, the powers and feats that relate to your choice of the Earthstrength feature frequently have an element of battlefield control, with a focus on locking down nearby enemies and helping you shrug off their attacks. Immobilizing and knocking prone are themes of the earth warden, as are pushes and pulls. The extra defense you gain from a shield pays off when you develop your character according to this archetype. In your other hand, you might want to wield a hammer to take advantage of feats that use your high Constitution, or a heavy blade for the extra accuracy and perhaps the Blade Opportunity feat to take advantage of the free attacks enemies grant as they try to escape your control. Because you can hamper an enemy's mobility, you're less likely to need a two-handed reach weapon to take revenge when they shift and attack someone else.

Wild Warden

"Trees are slow, but those they shelter are fast. I use the trunks of the forest to defend me from those enemies I have not yet blinded with my spear."

~ Amadi, longtooth shifter crescent guardian

Wildblood: Be Inescapable

Wild wardens recognize that the ordinary defensive gain from second wind is already enough to dissuade enemies from attacking them. Instead, the wildblood class feature piles on an extra penalty to marked enemies so that attacking your allies becomes even more difficult than hitting you during your second wind. The feats that relate to this class feature add an element of mobility, allowing you to shift to maintain your defensive posture or pursue a foe that disobeys your mark. This aspect of strikerlike mobility is reflected in the wild warden's encounter powers, which also contain a theme of imposing disabling conditions such as blinded, dazed, and weakened. Because enemies try to move away from you and you have the ability to pull them back in, reach weapons are ideal for the wild warden. Consider a polearm to work with feats that take advantage of your high Wisdom, or a spear for those that grant additional forced movement. Without the defensive bonus from carrying a shield, you should maintain a high Wisdom to help your AC and Will, as well as use your mobility to limit the number of attacks you're subjected to in any given turn.

Abilities

Choosing the right balance of ability scores requires an understanding of your role as a warden. Landing a solid hit is satisfying, as is dishing out plenty of hurt even on a bad damage roll. For that, Strength is what you need, but this primary attribute isn't as important to your role. Playing a warden well means being attuned to the more subtle pleasure that comes from watching your enemies fail to hit you with rolls that would have worked on anyone else if only they could move past you. Getting your AC to that level requires an equal emphasis on your secondary ability scores. Whether you focus on your Constitution or Wisdom depends on your choice of Guardian Might class feature, since this choice determines which score contributes to your armor class.

A typical arrangement of ability scores for a warden before racial bonuses would be 16 Strength, with another 16 assigned to Constitution for an earth warden or Wisdom for a wild warden. The other secondary stat would be 12, to boost a wild warden's hit points and surges or bolster an earth warden's Will. Of the remaining scores, a 12 Dexterity would be typical, since moving first on initiative is useful for establishing battlefield positioning and to benefit the Reflex that is a warden's weak point. Scores of 10 and 8 are assigned to Charisma and Intelligence respectively.

HEROIC TIER FEATS

Feat	Prerequisite	Benefit
Cast Iron Font	Warden, Font of Life, dwarf	Gain Constitution modifier temporary hit points when you save against poison
Courage of the Lone Stag	Warden, Nature's Wrath	Gain a bonus to weapon damage when you mark 3 or more enemies
Crushing Guardian	Warden	Gain a bonus to damage with hammer and maces while in guardian form.
Deft Guardian	Warden	Shift 1 square when you assume guardian form
Dilettante's Might	Warden, half-elf	You mark enemies hit with your dilettante power
Dragonborn Vengeance	Warden, dragonborn	You gain a bonus to *dragon breath* attacks against marked enemies
Elemental Might	Warden, genasi	+1 bonus to attack rolls when you use your racial manifestation power
Elven Guardian	Warden, elf	+2 to attack roll with *elven accuracy* while in guardian form.
Guard of Stone	Warden, goliath	Marked enemies take additional penalty to attack allies when you use *stone's endurance*
Orcblooded Nature	Warden, half-orc	When first bloodied gain a bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against marked enemies
Longtooth Vengeance	Warden, longtooth shifter	*Longtooth shifting* gives +3 to damage rolls against marked enemies
Razorclaw Swiftness	Warden, razorclaw shifter	While using *razorclaw shifting* shift 1 square before or after using Nature's Wrath
Wrath of the Forester	Warden, Nature's Wrath, human	Action point allows second use of Nature's Wrath

PARAGON TIER FEATS

Feat	Prerequisite	Benefit
Earth's Punishment	Warden, Earthstrength	Adjacent marked enemies take your Constitution modifier damage when they damage allies
Font of Vengeance	Warden, Font of Life	Damage enemy when you save against ongoing damage
Quickening Font	Warden, Font of Life	Speed increases by 1 when you save at the start of your turn
Vengeful Grasp	Warden, *warden's grasp power*	You can push 3 instead of slide 1 with warden's grasp

EPIC TIER FEATS

Feat	Prerequisite	Benefit
Dazing Fury	Warden, *warden's fury*	Weaken target you hit with *warden's fury*
Limitless Wrath	Warden, Nature's Wrath	Use Nature's Wrath during anyone's turn

Heroic Tier Feats

Any feat in this section is available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

Cast Iron Font

Prerequisite: Dwarf, warden, Font of Life class feature

Benefit: When you save against a poison effect at the start of your turn, you gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier.

Courage of the Lone Stag

Prerequisite: Warden, Nature's Wrath class feature

Benefit: When you mark three or more enemies with Nature's Wrath, you gain a +2 bonus to weapon damage rolls against creatures you mark until the start of your next turn. This bonus increases to +3 at 11th level, and to +4 at 21st level.

Crushing Guardian

Prerequisite: Warden

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls with hammer or mace weapon attacks while in guardian form. This bonus increases to +3 at 11th level, and to +4 at 21st level.

Deft Guardian

Prerequisite: Warden

Benefit: You can shift 1 square as a free action when you assume a guardian form.

Dilettante's Mark

Prerequisite: Half-elf, warden

Benefit: When you hit an enemy with your dilettante power, you mark that enemy until the end of your next turn.

Dragonborn Vengeance

Prerequisite: Dragonborn, warden

Benefit: You gain a +1 feat bonus to your *dragon breath* attack rolls when attacking creatures marked by you.

Elemental Might

Prerequisite: Genasi, warden

Benefit: When you use the encounter power associated with your racial manifestation, until the end of your next turn you gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls against creatures marked by you. This bonus increases to +3 at 11th level, and to +4 at 21st level.

Elven Guardian

Prerequisite: Elf, warden

Benefit: When you use your *elven accuracy* racial power to reroll a weapon attack while in guardian form, you gain a +2 feat bonus to the rerolled attack roll.

Guard of Stone

Prerequisite: Goliath, warden

Benefit: While you are under the effect of your *stone's endurance* racial power, each enemy marked by you takes an additional penalty to attack rolls for attacks that don't include you as a target. The penalty equals your Constitution modifier and lasts until the end of your next turn.

Half-Orc Vengeance

Prerequisite: Half-orc, warden

Benefit: The first time you are bloodied during an encounter, you gain a +2 feat bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against creatures marked by you until the end of your next turn.

Longtooth Vengeance

Prerequisite: Longtooth shifter, warden

Benefit: The bonus to damage rolls granted by your *longtooth shifting* racial power increases to +3 against targets that are marked by you.

Razorclaw Swiftness

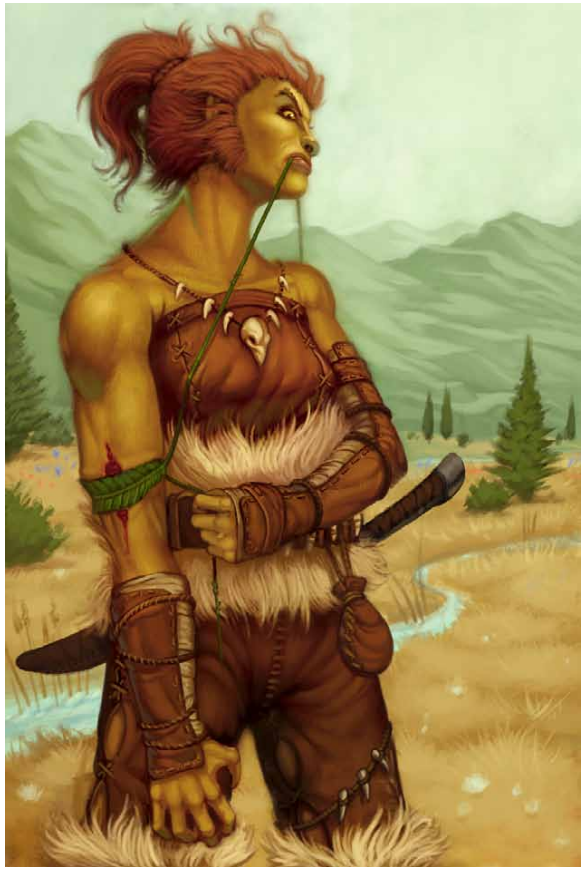
Prerequisite: Razorclaw shifter, warden

Benefit: While you are using your *razorclaw shifting* racial power, you can shift 1 square before or after using Nature's Wrath.

Wrath of the Forester

Prerequisite: Human, warden, Nature's Wrath class feature

Benefit: When you spend an action point to take an extra action, if you have already used your Nature's Wrath class feature during this turn, you can use it a second time before the end of your turn.



Paragon Tier Feats

Any feat in this section is available to a character of 11th level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Earth's Punishment

Prerequisite: 11th level, warden, Earthstrength class feature

Benefit: When an adjacent enemy that is marked by you makes an attack that does not include you as a target, and hits and damages at least one of your allies, it takes damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Font of Vengeance

Prerequisite: 11th level, warden, Font of Life class feature

Benefit: When you save against ongoing damage at the start of your turn, if you are adjacent to and can make an opportunity attack against the creature that inflicted the ongoing damage, you deal damage to that creature equal to your Strength modifier.

Quickening Font

Prerequisite: 11th level, warden, Font of Life class feature

Benefit: When you save against an effect at the start of your turn, your speed increases by 1 until the end of your turn.

Vengeful Grasp

Prerequisite: 11th level, warden, *warden's grasp* power

Benefit: When you make a *warden's grasp* attack, you can choose to push the target 3 squares rather than slide it 1 square.

Epic Tier Feats

Any feat in this section is available to a character of 21st level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Dazing Fury

Prerequisite: 21st level, warden, *warden's fury* power

Benefit: When you hit with *warden's fury*, instead of granting combat advantage, the target is dazed until the end of your next turn.

Limitless Wrath

Prerequisite: 21st level, warden, Nature's Wrath class feature

Benefit: When an enemy marked by you drops to 0 hit points, you can use Nature's Wrath as a free action, even if you have already used it this turn and even if it is not during your turn.

Warden Evocations

Warden's Lunge — Warden Attack 1

You lunge at your foe, making an attack it cannot ignore.

At-Will ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Level 21: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Effect: You mark the target until the end of your next turn.
Special: When you charge, you can use this power in place of a melee basic attack.

Storm Throw — Warden Attack 3

Calling lightning down from the clouds, you hurl your electrified weapon at your foe.

Encounter ✦ Lightning, Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Requirement: You must throw your weapon at the target.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage + 1d8 lightning damage, and you gain resist 10 lightning until the end of your next turn.
Effect: Your weapon returns to your hand.

Limbs of the Tree Spider — Warden Attack 7

You stab your weapon arm straight up, and it sprouts long, sharp wooden protrusions that stab out at your enemies like spider legs.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Close** burst 3
Target: Two creatures in burst
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage

Entangling Shield — Warden Utility 10

Your shield sprouts vines that grab at your enemy.

Daily ✦ Primal
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Requirement: You must be wielding a shield.
Trigger: You are hit with a melee attack
Target: The triggering creature
Effect: You gain a +4 bonus to the defense targeted by the triggering attack until the end of your next turn. If the triggering attack misses, the target is immobilized until the end of your next turn, or until you move away from the creature, whichever comes first.

Stalactite Hook — Warden Attack 13

Your weapon arm transforms into a spike of rock that skewers your foe and pulls it closer.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** 2
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage, you pull the target 1 square, and the target is slowed until the end of your next turn.

Vine Poultice — Warden Utility 16

You summon healing vines from the ground and pack the wound with them, creating an efficacious bandage.

Daily ✦ Healing, Primal
Minor Action **Melee** touch
Target: You or one creature
Effect: The target can spend a healing surge and make a saving throw against each effect it is suffering from that a save can end.

Reckless Ram Assault — Warden Attack 17

You grow massive ram's horns and bound at your foe, sending both him and you flying.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must charge and use this power in place of a melee basic attack.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 4[W] + Strength modifier damage, and both you and your target fall prone.

Land Shark Charge — Warden Attack 19

You sink into the earth, tunnel under the ground, reemerge under your foe, and skewer it with your weapon.

Daily ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must charge and use this power in place of a melee basic attack.
Special: You receive a +2 bonus to the attack roll instead of the normal +1 bonus for a charge. You do not provoke opportunity attacks for movement made during this charge.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 4[W] + Strength modifier damage, the target falls prone, and the target grants combat advantage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target falls prone.
Effect: You gain a +2 power bonus to your AC and Fortitude until the end of your next turn.

Primal Cascade — Warden Utility 22

You transform into a cascade of rushing water, flowing over the earth to a nearby location where you reform.

Encounter ✦ Polymorph, Primal
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You shift your speed, ignoring difficult terrain and water.

Form of the Lightning Lord — Warden Attack 29

As you speed up, the world slows down around you. You become living lightning. You dart around the landscape, leaving your sting where you will.

Daily ✦ Lightning, Polymorph, Primal, Teleportation
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You assume the form of the lightning lord until the end of the encounter. While in this form, as a move action, you can teleport up your speed. Any enemy you have marked and that is adjacent to you when you start this move takes lightning damage equal to your Strength modifier.
Once during this encounter, you can make the following attack while you are in this form.
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One enemy
Attack: Strength +6 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d10 lightning damage, and you teleport the target 10 squares to a space adjacent to you. The target is slowed and dazed until the end of your next turn.
Miss: Half damage, and you teleport the target 10 squares to a space adjacent to you.

Paragon Path

Guardian of Two Worlds

"I protect civilization from nature and nature from civilization."

Prerequisite: Warden

You are the guardian of two worlds. You know the perils of the wild, but you also know the corruption that dwells in the heart of civilization. Many wardens eschew civilization in favor of the purity of nature. Although you see the virtue in their point of view, you have chosen to straddle both realms in the hopes of keeping an eye on each. You know that if either becomes too dominant, neither can flourish. So you live and work, instructing people on how to interact with and be respectful of the forest, but also protecting them from deadly predators and harsh storms.

Guardian of Two Worlds Path Features

Guardian Trick (11th level): When you spend an action point to gain an extra action, if you are in guardian form, you can make your guardian form attack with that action even if you have already made that attack this encounter.

Tangling Wild (11th level): While you are in guardian form, any enemy marked by you that starts its turn adjacent to you is slowed until the end of its next turn.

The Warden of Both Worlds (16th level): On your turn, the first time you hit an enemy marked by you, you can make one saving throw against an effect that a save can end as a free action.

Guardian of Two Worlds Evocations

Strike of the Sentinel Attack 11
Guardian of Two Worlds

Your attack forces your enemies to stand their ground and face your threat.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee weapon**
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Target: One creature
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and any enemy adjacent to you and marked by you is immobilized until the end of its next turn.

Stand of the Protector Utility 12
Guardian of Two Worlds

Those who stand near you are revived and refreshed by your stalwart presence.

Daily ✦ Primal, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: At the start of your turn, when you use your Font of Life class feature, a single ally adjacent to you can also make a single saving throw against an effect that a save can end as a free action.

Form of the Stag Knight Attack 20
Guardian of Two Worlds

You become the stag knight, a creature of legend that stalks the borderland to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

Daily ✦ Polymorph, Primal
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You assume the form of the guardian of both worlds until the end of the encounter. While in this form, you can use Nature's Wrath to mark any enemy within 2 squares instead of just adjacent enemies.
Once during this encounter, you can make the following weapon attack while you are in this form.
Immediate Interrupt **Melee** weapon
Trigger: A creature marked by you hits an ally with a melee attack
Target: The triggering enemy
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 4[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the ally hit with the triggering attack gains a +4 bonus to the defense that the triggering attack targeted until the end of your next turn.
Miss: Half damage.
Special: When you spend an action point to gain an extra action while in this guardian form, and you have already used this attack, you gain another use of this attack this encounter.

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Cleric Essentials

Wisdom of the Gods

By Logan Bonner
Illustrations by Tyler Jacobson

"Worship is a language all can speak and all can understand. Only when we pray do we speak with our true voices and express the desires of our souls. Through the investitures of faith, one's voice becomes louder and more clear. One chosen by destiny to follow this path must speak to one's god for the benefit of many who are less faithful. The responsibility of calling out for the protection of the world often falls upon the strongest voices in worship and faith."

—"The Voices of Faith"

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Devotion and religious knowledge define all clerics, but beyond those categories, they're a varied bunch. The aggressive, forest-dwelling elf cleric of Corellon and the pacifist, urban halfling devoted to Erathis both have greater faith than most people, but they approach interactions and battles in far different ways. The greatest influence on any cleric is his or her god, and all things flow from this divine worship.

However your enemies are introduced to the might of your god, your allies will remember the assistance you give them through healing and boons of divine strength.

The Basics

"The first enemy of faith is doubt. To walk the path to divine glory, your first step must be confident. Burn the doubt from your mind and trust in your connection to the divine."

—"To Walk Avandra's Road"

Though all clerics are leaders, they have a wide breadth of ways to help their allies. You can fight up close and personal, say prayers from the back rank, or use powers that don't cause physical pain at all! Most of your leader abilities come through your powers rather than class features, so make sure you pick powers that improve your ability to help out your allies by healing them or by granting them bonuses.

Though the cleric is a leader, the class can also emulate a controller to some degree. Look for powers that give your enemies penalties and lock them down if you want to play this way.

Channel Divinity

The basic powers for the Channel Divinity class feature are enough for many players, but you can gain more by taking deity-specific or domain-based Channel Divinity feats. Since you can use only one of these powers per encounter, you have little reason to grab a whole bunch of them.

Both *divine fortune* and *turn undead* are pretty straightforward, and it's easy to tell when to use them. *Divine fortune* is a fallback power if you have no other Channel Divinity powers to use, but it's not that great a power. Consider picking up a Channel Divinity feat that you know you want to use every fight, so you have something useful out of Channel Divinity.

Healer's Mercy: Any cleric can take the *healer's mercy* power (*Divine Power*, page 30) instead of *turn undead*. Even if you aren't playing a shielding cleric, you might consider this option if you know your campaign is unlikely to feature many undead. It's also a great power for when the whole party is beaten up. You can trigger *healer's mercy* to heal all your allies, then use your second wind on your next turn to heal yourself.

The Heal Skill

Although it's not mandatory, the Heal skill is extremely useful for all clerics. Even after you run out of healing powers, you can use this skill to grant saving throws, trigger second winds, and keep allies from dying.

Healing Word

The baseline healing option all clerics have, *healing word* is a straightforward way to keep your allies up and fighting. Don't forget your Healer's Lore feature, too! Your *healing word* allows your ally to regain hit points equal to his or her healing surge value + your Wisdom modifier + 1d6 at first level, with no extra effort on your part.

Wait for It: Keep track of how many additional hit points your *healing word* grants, and encourage your allies to monitor their healing surge values. This sort of preparation can keep you from "wasting" healing on people who haven't taken much damage. You can make it easier on yourself by just waiting till someone is bloodied to heal them. Especially at low levels, you could run out of *healing word* uses during a fight. Consider holding off on using *healing word* until an ally is in serious danger, to make sure you don't run out of uses before you need them.

Feats: Since *healing word* is such a prominent, multi-use power, look at the *Divine Power* feats that enhance it. Consider Defensive Healing Word, which gives your target a bonus to all defenses for a turn, and Extended Healing to extend the burst if you're a back-rank cleric. When you reach epic level, you can take Supreme Healer, which lets you heal two people per use, doubling the amount of healing you give, but not increasing the number of actions you use to do so.

Rituals

You start out with two 1st-level rituals. Any cleric can take Brew Potion (though you can't use it until you reach a higher level), or choose Create Holy Water (*Divine Power*, page 156) to have another way to attack demons and undead.

Your best bet if you want to use rituals effectively is to take training in Arcana and expand your pool of options. The 1st-level choices Tenser's Floating Disk and Comprehend Language have high utility. As you reach higher levels, pick up useful Religion- and Heal-based rituals such as Hand of Fate, Discern Lies, and the ever-popular Raise Dead.

If you're the only ritual caster in your party, pick up more rituals than you would otherwise. Focus on ones that help you travel or communicate, such as Endure Elements, Sending, and Linked Portal.

Choosing Your Deity

Though you don't have many restrictions to your character based on the deity you serve, this choice has a big effect on who your character is. You can pick a god who fits with how you want to roleplay your character.

On the rules side of things, you can take a look at the Channel Divinity feats for the different deities. You can also read the domains from *Divine Power* to see which ones you can access as a follower of each deity. These feats allow you to have a little more of the deity's theme come through in your powers.

Cleric Builds

As a cleric, most of your choices and differentiation come from power and feat choices rather than class features. Consequently, your builds are pretty broad, and it's easy to mix and match powers. (Though taking both Strength and Wisdom powers probably isn't worth it.)

You can differentiate your cleric by picking certain means of delivering leader buffs and healing. The main choices you have are described here.

- ✦ Melee or Ranged: If you want to go into melee, choose the battle cleric. The devoted and shielding cleric operate at range.
- ✦ Healing: Powers that give healing surges, and a smaller number of powers that give healing without making the target spend a surge, are an essential part of every cleric's arsenal.
- ✦ Buffs: You can choose powers that increase your allies' defenses, attacks, damage, or temporary hit points. These choices allow you to influence how entire battles play out, and give you a way to designate targets for your allies to smack down.
- ✦ Control: Plenty of cleric powers, especially those designed for the shielding build, sacrifice damage output for high control.

Battle Cleric

"The monstrous creatures of the world are strong, yes, but outmatched by the might of the faithful. To show these beasts the glory of the gods, a crusader must speak the universal language of honed blades and spilt blood."

–"The Battle Sermon of Kord"

Designed for melee combat, a battle cleric leads from the front. This build takes effort if you want to make it work. You don't have that great of a weapon selection, and your armor tops out at chainmail, so consider upgrading your options here, and possibly pick up a shield. The Battle Cleric Armaments feat was designed to give melee clerics a jumpstart on their equipment. The feats Battle Healer (from *Divine Power*) and Toughness can keep your hit point total high, which you need to stay in melee.

This build is a great choice if your party is short on defenders, since you have powers that can mark or give you other defender-style effects. It also fits in a party with several leaders, where your higher damage and defenses are needed more than your buffs and heals.

Power Selection

As a Strength-based cleric, you're drawing on a smaller pool of powers, but you can still find a wide variety of effects within them. You use melee attacks (with perhaps a close attack or two), so you should have at least a few powers that increase your defenses or durability. When choosing healing powers, look for ones that you can use on yourself, too, since you might need it more than your allies!

When selecting your at-will powers, consider taking one of the two Strength-based at-wills from

Player's Handbook along with *recovery strike* from *Divine Power*. If you take *recovery strike* and *righteous brand*, you will have a power to lay down more damage on a target and one to protect an ally from damage.

If your party has multiple leaders, take high-damage powers. The cleric is, by default, an awesome healer, but try not to take more healing powers than you need. Keep your healing powers down to just *healing word* and maybe one other power. (Consider a daily utility that gives you a lot of bang for your buck, such as *cure light wounds* or *mass cure light wounds*.)

Devoted Cleric

"Show the strength of the gods in all you do. Burn down foes with the light of the heavens, fill your comrades with the might of the devout, and heal wounds so you can preserve the life bestowed upon us by the divine forces."

–Initiation rites of Guaron-doa Monastery

This build relies primarily on Wisdom-based ranged attacks, and stays out of the thick of combat. The radiant attacks that constitute the core of this build earned it the nickname "laser cleric." Worry less about your defenses and weapons. Instead concentrate on getting a good holy symbol and pick feats that enhance your ranged powers. Not many feats work great for *every* cleric in this build, since it's such a broad category. Look through the racial feat options and your deity's Channel Divinity and domain feats.

Power Selection

With *Divine Power*, you have more options to make a consistent devoted cleric who uses ranged attacks. However, avoid skipping over some of the great close attacks that use Wisdom. With this build, you should grab a variety of powers. *Beacon of hope* might not deal damage, but it has a huge effect on the battle. Many powers are like this, and you can pick up a couple without affecting your damage output too much. However, if you gravitate toward those powers exclusively, consider taking the shielding cleric build instead.

For your at-wills, definitely take the amazing *sacred flame* power. For your second choice, compare *lance of faith* with *gaze of defiance* (from the *Player's Handbook Heroes: Series 1* miniatures set). If you're building a radiant-focused caster and want a more predictable bonus, take the former. If you'd like to take advantage of a monster's low Will, take the latter.

As with the battle cleric, you can build a better devoted cleric if you're aware of the capabilities of the other characters in the party. You might go heavy on low-damage, high-control powers if you have no controller, or choose several defense-boosting powers if your party is full of melee characters.

Shielding Cleric

"Embody observation and control in your actions. Rage is not a boon, but a liability. Safeguard those who lack your discipline, for they too can be tools of the gods if you provide proper guidance."

–"The Tenets of Ioun's Watchers"

The less aggressive, self-sacrificing shielding cleric (*Divine Power*, page 30) presents a different way to play a class. Instead of doing damage with your own attacks, you use powers that give big bonuses to allies and nasty control effects to enemies. This build plays differently from other builds and classes, so it's not for everybody. Make sure you're happy with a supporting role, or you won't enjoy playing a shielding cleric. This build can bring a lot of healing to the table, and it functions well as the sole leader in a party. A shielding cleric can also pick up the slack in a group without a controller.

Alternate your feat picks between those that increase your healing and control abilities and ones that give you a little more defense, extra hit points, or increases to skills and noncombat abilities. Since you don't have any pressure to increase your damage, you can fill those feat slots in other interesting ways.

How Much Healing Is Enough?

The cleric is a great healer out of the gate. You can make your cleric an even better healer, but it is possible to have *too much* healing. After a few combats, see if you had healing powers remaining after each encounter, or if you spent more actions healing when you'd rather have been attacking. If you run into this problem, consider retraining to replace some of those powers. Your play style will color your tolerance for the number of healing powers you want. If you play a shielding cleric, for instance, you might want to heal people most rounds. Still, if you find that your character offers healing round after round, and the other PCs refuse the healing because they're still in good shape, you can replace some of your healing with options that increase your damage or give offensive benefits to allies.

Healer's Mercy

A powerful healing option, *healer's mercy* has broader utility than *turn undead*. If you're going with a pure shielding build, you have plenty of attacks that don't deal damage. As a result, you can ignore the weakened condition *healer's mercy* inflicts on you.

Power Selection

The shielding cleric build is great if you want to play a pacifist cleric, but you can also mix powers intended for this build with powers that deal damage. If you're in a small group, think twice about avoiding powers that deal damage, or you could be in for some long, drawn-out fights. On the other hand, if you're a leader surrounded by strikers, the shielding cleric can provide much-needed control and keep your low-defense, low-hit point pals from getting splattered.

For at-wills, *astral seal* is the default shielding power. Its high accuracy makes it dependable. For your other pick, you need to take a damaging power. *Sacred flame* is powerful, but its effect fills the same goal as *astral seal*. Take a look at *gaze of defiance* (from the *Player's Handbook Heroes: Series 1* miniatures set). It gives you an option to hit Will, and it grants a nice bonus to accuracy.

When picking powers, don't forget some of the great nondamaging attacks from *Player's Handbook*, such as *cause fear* and *command*.

Abilities

The best ability scores for clerics affect not only their attacks and riders, but also fit well with useful skills.

After you choose the ability scores closely associated with your build, you might want to assign your remaining scores to fit in with the themes of your deity. You can look at the skills in the "Your Deity and You" section of *Divine Power* (page 124) and choose scores that match those skills.

Wisdom

Two of the three cleric builds need a high Wisdom, and the battle cleric should still have a decent Wisdom for Healer's Lore. The essential skills Heal, Insight, and Perception all use Wisdom. If you put resources into Perception, you detect hidden foes and objects better than anyone else in the party.

Strength

As a battle cleric, Strength contributes not only to attack rolls and damage rolls, but also allows you to take feats such as Armor Proficiency to make yourself tougher. You can also consider taking Versatile Channeler (from *Divine Power*) to gain the paladin's Channel Divinity: *divine strength* power, which allows you to deal bonus damage with an attack once per encounter. Though Strength is essential as the attack stat for battle clerics, clerics of other builds don't have much use for it.

Charisma

For the cleric, Charisma is a general-purpose ability score that increases the effectiveness of powers. Sometimes it adds a bonus to healing, damage, or the potency of control effects. A solid Charisma helps out any character, but you if you need a high score elsewhere, you can rob points from Charisma and have Wisdom keep your Will up.

Intelligence

Though it's not relevant to your class features or powers, Intelligence contributes to Religion and other knowledge skills.

Constitution

A good Constitution is essential for a battle cleric, and it can fuel shielding cleric powers that cause you to lose your own hit points (such as *life transference* and *stream of life*). If your cleric has a low Strength, make sure Constitution is decent so your Fortitude is high enough.

Ability Score Spreads

You have two choices for your highest ability score: Strength or Wisdom. Even a battle cleric should have a decent Wisdom to take advantage of Healer's Lore and Wisdom-based skills. The spreads described below are a good baseline, but adjust them depending on your race and other options you want to pick up. These spreads are conservative. You can put an 18 in your highest score and drop others. With that method, your cleric can excel at attacks and a narrow category of other tasks, but doesn't have as broad a skill set and has one especially low defense.

Battle Cleric Spread		
Str 16	Dex 8	Wis 14
Con 13	Int 14	Cha 10
Devoted Cleric Spread		
Str 13	Dex 8	Wis 16
Con 10	Int 14	Cha 14
Shielding Cleric Spread		
Str 10	Dex 8	Wis 16
Con 13	Int 14	Cha 14

Cleric Dailies

Your daily prayer options have some of the best ongoing bonuses in the game. Although several increase damage or defenses, a few also give you regeneration (*divine power* and *holy wrath*), grant resist (*moment of glory* from *Divine Power*), or create conjured weapons that can add another damage source to the encounter (*spiritual weapon* and others). As a general rule, pick powers with a strong "Effect" over ones that have most of their oomph sitting on the "Hit" line. Drop these powers early in combat to take advantage of their effects for as long as possible.

Race

Races that offer increases to Strength or Wisdom are the strongest choices for clerics. The following table assesses both ability score adjustments and racial powers when determining which races are mechanically suited to certain classes. These choices aren't set in stone, and they aren't necessarily typical of the race. For instance, even though drow are well-suited to being shielding clerics, you might want to pick a different build to play up the race's inclination toward cruelty.

RACE AND BUILD

Race	Recommended Builds
Changeling	Devoted Cleric
Deva	Shielding Cleric
Dragonborn	Battle Cleric
Drow	Shielding Cleric
Dwarf	Battle Cleric
Eladrin	Devoted Cleric
Elf	Devoted Cleric
Genasi	Battle Cleric
Gnoll	Battle Cleric
Gnome	Shielding Cleric
Goliath	Battle Cleric
Half-Elf	Shielding Cleric
Half-Orc	Battle Cleric
Halfling	Devoted Cleric
Human	Devoted Cleric
Kalashtar	Shielding Cleric
Longtooth	Shifter Battle Cleric
Minotaur	Battle Cleric
Razorclaw	Shifter Devoted Cleric
Shadar-Kai	Devoted Cleric
Tiefling	Devoted Cleric
Warforged	Battle Cleric

Domains

Introduced in *Divine Power*, domains alter at-will prayers and give more Channel Divinity options. These options have several factors to process: the deity you worship, the Channel Divinity power, and the powers the domain alters. If you need a decent starting place (beyond the roleplaying options you receive from the domain), search the domain feats for at-will powers you've chosen. Here's a quick reference list.

ASSOCIATED CLERIC POWERS FOR DOMAINS

Power	Domains
Astral seal*	Fate, knowledge, life, torment, tyranny vengeance
Lance of faith	Arcana, luck, strife, sun, undeath, winter
Priest's shield	Civilization, darkness, protection, strength, war
Recovery strike*	Change, earth, love, sea, trickery, wilderness
Righteous brand	Creation, death, destruction, freedom, hope, justice, madness, moon, poison, skill, storm

*This power appears in *Divine Power*.

Of course, you don't *have* to take all the options from a domain or constrain yourself to only one. For instance, if your cleric worships Moradin, you could choose the Power of Protection feat to give another ally a bonus to all defenses when you use *priest's shield*, and take the Earth Hold feat to gain a Channel Divinity power that slows enemies with no attack roll.

HEROIC TIER FEATS

Name	Prerequisite	Benefit
Battle Cleric Armaments	Str 15, cleric	Proficiency with light shields and one military weapon
Domain Synergy	Cleric, domain feat and the domain's divinity feat	Gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls with the domain's at-will powers when you use the domain's Channel Divinity power
Greater Divine Fortune	Cleric, divine fortune	Divine fortune bonus increases to +3
Harbinger of Rebirth	Cleric	Gain +2 to Heal, plus allies within 5 squares gain +5 feat bonus to death saving throws
Pacifist's Reward	Cleric	If you didn't deal damage on your turn, gain 2 temporary hit points when you hit with a nondamaging attack
Word of Retaliation	Cleric, healing word	Target regains extra hit points equal to the number of adjacent enemies when you use healing word

PARAGON TIER FEATS

Name	Prerequisites	Benefit
Assured Healing	11th level, cleric	An ally regains hit points equal to your Charisma modifier when you miss with a divine attack power with the healing keyword
Gambler's Word	11th level, cleric, healing word	Gain another use of your healing word when you score a critical hit

Heroic Tier Feats

Any feat in this section is available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

Battle Cleric Armaments

Prerequisite: Str 15, cleric

Benefit: You gain proficiency with light shields and with one military weapon of your choice.

Domain Synergy

Prerequisite: Cleric, domain feat and the domain's divinity feat

Benefit: When you use the Channel Divinity power of a domain for which you have the domain feat, you gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls with that domain's associated at-will powers until the end of the encounter.

Builds by Deity

You might want to choose your build based on what best fits your deity's spheres of influence. This list shows the builds that best match each god.

Deity	Typical Build
Avandra	Devoted Cleric
Bahamut	Battle Cleric
Corellon	Devoted Cleric
Erathis	Shielding Cleric
Ioun	Shielding Cleric
Kord	Battle Cleric
Melora	Battle Cleric
Moradin	Battle Cleric
Pelor	Shielding Cleric
The Raven Queen	Devoted Cleric
Sehanine	Devoted Cleric

Greater Divine Fortune

Prerequisite: Cleric, divine fortune power

Benefit: The bonus granted by divine fortune increases to +3.

Harbinger of Rebirth

Prerequisite: Cleric

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to Heal checks. In addition, any ally within 5 squares of you gains a +5 feat bonus to death saving throws.

Pacifist's Reward

Prerequisite: Cleric

Benefit: When you hit with an attack that doesn't deal damage, if you didn't deal any damage on your turn, gain 2 temporary hit points at the end of the turn.

The temporary hit points increase to 3 at 11th level, and to 4 at 21st level.

Word of Retaliation

Prerequisite: Cleric, *healing word* power

Benefit: When you use *healing word*, the target regains extra hit points equal to the number of enemies adjacent to him or her.

Paragon Tier Feats

Any feat in this section is available to a character of 11th level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Assured Healing

Prerequisite: 11th level, cleric

Benefit: When you miss with a divine attack power with the healing keyword, and that power has no effect on a miss, you or one ally within 5 squares of you regains hit points equal to your Charisma modifier.

Gambler's Word

Prerequisite: 11th level, cleric, *healing word* power

Benefit: Once per encounter, when you score a critical hit, you gain an additional use of your *healing word* power during this encounter.

Cleric Prayers

These powers interact with your Channel Divinity and *healing word* powers, amplifying the power of your prayers.

Vengeful Flare **Cleric Attack 1**

Seeing your ally in pain, you vow vengeance as you rain holy fire upon your foe.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Fire, Implement, Radiant
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Wisdom vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + Wisdom modifier fire damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses until the end of your next turn. If you used *healing word* this turn, this attack deals extra radiant damage equal to your Charisma modifier.

Angelic Witnesses **Cleric Utility 2**

Your prayers bring the attention of ghostly minor angels, who stand and silently observe you in battle.

Daily ✦ Conjuration, Divine
Minor Action **Close** burst 10
Effect: You conjure a silent, ghostly angel in 1 square in the burst. The angel lasts until the end of your next turn and occupies its square. When an ally adjacent to the angel spends a healing surge, he or she regains 4 extra hit points. For each time you used *healing word* or a Channel Divinity power since the start of your last turn, you conjure an additional angel in a square that's not adjacent to another ghostly angel.
Sustain Minor: The effect persists, and you can move each angel 3 squares.

Destined Duel — Cleric Attack 3

You mark an enemy with a holy sigil and cause your ally to rise up and defeat this foe.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Implement, Radiant
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Wisdom vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10 + Wisdom modifier radiant damage, and an ally within 5 squares of you gains a +2 power bonus to attack rolls against the target until the end of your next turn. If you use *healing word* on that ally this turn, the ally also gains a +4 power bonus to damage rolls against the target until the end of your next turn.

Divine Juggernaut — Cleric Attack 5

Your body surges with the manifestation of divine wrath, and even simple prayers make your onslaught more forceful.

Daily ✦ Divine, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, when you use a Channel Divinity or *healing word* power, the target takes damage equal to your Charisma modifier and you and each ally adjacent to you gain temporary hit points equal to your Charisma modifier.

Gift of Good Fortune — Cleric Utility 6

You beseech the divine forces that shape destiny and fate to smile on your ally.

Encounter ✦ Divine
Minor Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One ally
Effect: The target makes a saving throw. If you used *divine fortune* this turn, the ally receives a bonus to the saving throw equal to the bonus your *divine fortune* grants.

Forgemaster's Flame — Cleric Attack 7

The astral fire you call down limns your foe, possibly causing it to become sluggish, and it provides healing to an ally.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Fire, Healing, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier fire damage. If you've used a Channel Divinity power this encounter, you mark the target until the end of your next turn and an ally within 5 squares of you can spend a healing surge. If you haven't, the target grants combat advantage and is slowed until the end of your next turn.

Reverent Mettle — Cleric Utility 10

You blunt an attack against your comrade using only your devout will. Calling upon your deity allows you to perform this trick again.

Encounter ✦ Divine
Immediate Interrupt **Close** burst 5
Trigger: An ally within 5 squares of you takes damage from an attack
Target: The triggering ally in burst
Effect: Reduce the triggering attack's damage by 5 + your Charisma modifier.
Special: When you use your Channel Divinity power you may regain the use of *reverent mettle*.

Chains of Blazing Light — Cleric Attack 13

Columns of intense, fiery light blast down and mark your foes with divine sigils, leaving them shaken.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Implement, Radiant
Standard Action **Area** burst 2 within 10
Target: Up to four creatures in burst
Attack: Wisdom vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is dazed until the end of your turn. If you've used a Channel Divinity power this encounter, then the next time the target is hit by an attack before the end of your next turn, that attack deals 5 + your Charisma modifier extra radiant damage.

Sacred Armistice — Cleric Attack 15

Your prayer affects a short-term pact of peace and gives you the divine sanction to heal the wounds of battle.

Daily ✦ Divine, Fear, Implement
Standard Action **Close** blast 5
Target: Each creature in blast
Attack: Wisdom vs. Will
Hit: The target cannot attack (save ends).
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, when you use *healing word*, the target of that power gains a +5 power bonus to all defenses until the end of your next turn.

Prayer Made Real — Cleric Utility 22

Each prayer you recite builds on the one before it, culminating in a great boon that makes you and your allies into a divine army.

Daily ✦ Divine
Minor Action **Area** burst 2 within 10
Target: You and each ally in burst
Effect: The target gains a +2 power bonus to saving throws. If you used *healing word* this turn, the target also gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses. If you used a Channel Divinity power since the start of your last turn, the target also gains a +1 power bonus to attack rolls. The effect lasts until the end of the encounter.

About the Author

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Fighter: The Great Weapon

By Robert J. Schwalb
Illustrations by Adam Paquette (Empty Room Studios), James Kei McClellan, and Sean Macdonald

Rain drenched the students. It cut runnels through their filth, mingling with their sweat. Still, they worked, struggling to heft the greatswords. Their captain watched, and his compliments were rare.

Captain Tytos Long stood near the gate, his arms folded behind his back. Water darkened his clothes, washing his face until a steady stream fell from his nose. His eyes flicked from trainee to trainee, but he never moved.

Sergeant Fess was a different story. The stocky dwarf paced between the students, barking commands, spitting insults, grabbing arms to adjust posture, all the while shaking his head in disgust. They would never be more than militiamen. There wasn't a true fighter in the lot.

"Enough," said Tytos, his voice a whisper, but so sharp it cut through the thunder.

Blades dropped to the mud. Students followed. Rain. Gasps. Groans. All a tangle of bodies, sweat, and mud.

"Awful," he said.

They expected this. Tytos had a reputation for being a bastard and the students didn't expect anything different from their master.

The captain unfolded his fingers and reached down to pick up a muddy blade from the training field. He inspected it, turning it over in his hands. He rubbed blade clean.

"This," he said, "is not a toy. Not something to be discarded no matter how tired you are. This is the only thing standing between you and death. Yes, it's heavy. Yes, it's a right beast to fight with, but it's your salvation. You can't

The War College

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hide behind plate armor on the battlefield. You have no shield to stop your enemy's swords. All you have between you and death is your weapon. Drop the weapon and you die. It's as simple as that.

"Sergeant? How many do you count still holding their weapons?"

"One sir . . . no. Two."

"You two. You're done. Go inside and get something to eat.

"The rest of you . . . you're dead, and the dead don't eat. Go clean your weapons. When you're done, apologize to the smith for soiling his good work. Tomorrow, you might just be hungry enough to pay attention, yes?"

The yard cleared, leaving the sergeant and the captain.

"Captain?"

"Yes, sergeant?"

"Any hope for them?"

"Not a bit, Fess, not a bit."

Students selected for fighter training spend a year learning the fundamental techniques, such as how to position themselves to contain their foes and how to gain mastery with military weapons. The demanding training chews up many trainees, and the attrition rate in this discipline is the highest in the War College. Those who drop out often become warriors, militia, and common soldiers. Those who succeed move on to advanced training in one of four curriculums, each tied to the fighting disciplines taught in the War College since Nerath founded it.

The fighting disciplines correspond to the four available fighter builds. Each course tests the trainee in different ways, which is why instructors sort students based on their performance throughout their first year. Strong and hardy fighters gravitate toward the battlerager discipline, while quick and agile fighters might become tempest fighters. Guardian fighters are drawn from cautious warriors, while great weapon fighters tend to become the catch-all for everyone else.

The Great Weapon Fighter

The easiest fighter archetype to play is undoubtedly the great weapon fighter. Concerned with dishing out as much damage as possible, this character uses the biggest weapons and takes the most punishment. What a great weapon fighter gains in simplicity, though, it loses in durability. Sword-and-board fighters have the better defenses, battleragers can generate their own temporary hit points, and tempest fighters possess enough mobility to escape when the situation gets tough. The great warrior has to take it on the chin round after round until, as is often the case, he or she drops and starts praying for 20s on death saving throws—not an ideal option for players who just want their characters to hit the bad guy and knock it down. Luckily, you can do a few things to avoid the pitfalls common to playing these characters. This is where the War College comes in.

Making the Cut

"You are strong enough to pick up the great weapon, but how long can you hold it?"

~Captain Tytos Long

Students selected for great weapon training demonstrate strength and endurance. Instructors look for natural talent combined with hidden potential. With enough training, a student can catch up and add muscle over a frame that can support it.

Great weapon fighters emphasize striker as a secondary role, meaning their attacks focus more on damage output rather than locking down their enemies. For this reason, Strength is essential since it grants accuracy and damage output. Hitting is far more important than just marking an enemy since these fighters depend on dropping enemies before their opponents get a chance to hit them back.

To keep their Strength high, great weapon fighters rarely have good defenses. Rather than worry about keeping Reflex and Will high, instructors toughen their students by subjecting them to endurance training, developing their core strength, and having them do grueling exercises so they can withstand injuries on the battlefield. This all translates into high hit points and to get them, you need a high Constitution.

For all that great weapon fighters devote training to building their mass, the instructors never minimize the importance of battlefield awareness. Students are constantly tested by being placed in tough situations where they must anticipate attacks or suffer a stinging strike from a direction they overlooked. Wisdom is of vital importance since it helps the fighter keep his opponent from running away.

Since you need only two abilities to make this class work, you might be tempted to put all your points in Strength. With the right race, you can easily start with a 20. As impressive and awesome as that is, doing so grants you only a 14 Constitution and an 11 in one other ability score. Not only does this drop your hit points and surges, but it also makes your other defenses vulnerable. Optimal races (see below) offset this risk by boosting Constitution.

Potential

Natural talent~ability scores~guides many instructors in decisions about which course a student will follow, but it's not the only factor. Potential also figures prominently in these decisions. Larger, bulkier students can make excellent great weapon fighters, while small and slighter students might drift toward another path. While the instructors are careful to not let race be the only deciding factor, natural proclivities found in heritage and culture are the best test for determining a trainee's future.

Racial Adjustments

The most common way to pick a race for a class and build is through ability adjustments. The great weapon fighter, as discussed above, favors Strength, Constitution, and Wisdom, so any race granting a bonus to these abilities is ideal. Race-class combinations rate from optimal to disadvantaged. Optimal combinations provide a bonus to the primary ability (Strength) and either of the class's secondary abilities (Constitution or Wisdom). Advantaged combinations provide a bonus to Strength or to both Constitution and Wisdom. Standard combinations provide a bonus to either Constitution or Wisdom, while disadvantage combinations provide a bonus to two abilities unrelated to the great weapon fighter.

Optimal Combinations (Strength and Constitution or Strength and Wisdom): Goliath, minotaur, longtooth shifter, warforged

Advantaged (Strength or Constitution and Wisdom): Dragonborn, dwarf, genasi, half-orc, human

Standard (Constitution or Wisdom): Deva, elf, gnoll, half-elf, kalashtar, razorclaw shifter

Disadvantaged (other): Changeling, drow, eladrin, gnome, halfling, shadar-kai, tiefling

Racial Features

Although ability adjustments are important, they don't tell the entire story. Skill bonuses, size, and fixed assets such as the elf's Wild Step racial feature all weigh heavily toward how a race can perform as a class.

Skills: Although you might not rely on skills in the way other characters do, you can benefit from any skill that helps you negotiate the battlefield and also deal with combat's consequences. Athletics is an obvious choice since it covers climbing, jumping, and swimming. Heal is also good for attending to fallen comrades or treating persistent injuries (such as disease). Finally, Endurance shields you from travel's rigors and keeps you healthy even when exploring pestilential areas.

Size: Gnomes and halflings have a tough time as great weapon fighters since they cannot wield two-handed weapons. Small great weapon fighters must use versatile weapons instead, but they do not benefit from the versatile property. Faced with these disadvantages, you might consider a different build for a Small fighter.

Racial Powers: Most races offer unique powers to help distinguish them from other races while also suggesting key tactics. Racial powers tend to fall into one of three categories: offense, defense, or mobility.

Great weapon fighters benefit from defensive powers to shore up lower defenses and bolster durability.

Offensive Powers: Changeling, deva, dragonborn, drow, elf, genasi, gnoll, half-orc, longtooth shifter, minotaur, tiefling

Defensive Powers: Changeling, deva, drow, gnome, goliath, halfling, kalashtar, longtooth shifter, razorclaw shifter, warforged

Mobility Powers: Eladrin, genasi, razorclaw shifter, shadar-kai

No Powers: Dwarf, half-elf, human

Core Training

"Great weapons are deceptively complex. You might think you just have to connect, but there's a lot more to it as you will soon see."

~Captain Tytos Long

Six captains oversee all training at Caer Storogal, but two captains manage the great weapon fighters. While Janus Storn and Tytos Long are talented warriors and gifted instructors, their techniques are as far apart as one can get. Storn is patient, and he cultivates students by reinforcing the strong qualities, while Long uses endless drills and pushes students to the brink of exhaustion and despair, chiseling the forms into his students' minds.

Combat training shapes your tactics and capabilities on the battlefield. While powers express your training, feats can perform in a similar capacity. Your instructor encourages feat selection based on the lessons you learned at the War College.

Captain Janus Storn

Producing great weapon fighters and tactical warlords, Janus Storn understands the perils in relying too much on offense. He teaches techniques to temper the recklessness the style breeds and focuses on battlefield awareness and weapon training that emphasizes polearms and heavy blades. In his mind, a great weapon is useless when you are vulnerable to attacks, so his methods teach his students to isolate enemies and concentrate their attacks against a single enemy.

Accuracy Feats: Anything that helps your accuracy and your damage output is ideal. The following chart shows accuracy at 1st level based on assets. Low AC describes artillery and brutes. Average AC is typical for controllers, lurkers, and skirmishers. High AC is typical for soldiers.

ARMOR CLASS

Condition	Low	Average	High
Strength 17 (+6)	70%	60%	50%
Strength 18 (+7)	75%	65%	55%
High Accuracy (+8)	80%	70%	60%
Weapon Expertise (+9)	85%	75%	65%

The table can help you decide what sort of weapon to use as well as whether you need the Weapon Expertise feat right away. If you're going with a high accuracy weapon (a greatsword), consider picking up proficiency in the fullblade and wait on Weapon Expertise. On the other hand, you achieve the same result with a greataxe and the Weapon Expertise feat.

At a certain level, accuracy is more important than damage. An enemy can take between two to three hits before falling—fewer if you're using encounter or daily powers. Is the extra point on average gained from a greataxe really worth the 5% loss to accuracy? Some weapons without high accuracy compensate by granting the high crit quality, but again, you have a 5% chance each time you swing to deal extra damage that is the equivalent of hitting the target with a basic attack, and you're just as likely to drop the target on that attack even if you had just scored a regular hit.

Racial Feats: Feats tied to races reinforce your natural talents while also opening new tactics to help you overcome your enemies. Racial feats might encourage specific weapon choices, but they can also shore up potential weaknesses by offsetting lower attack modifiers. Good examples include the Dwarven Weapon Training feat, Action Surge for humans, Dragonborn Frenzy, Eladrin Soldier, Group Assault, Lingering Wrath, and so on.

Captain Tytos Long

Although popular, Captain Storn frequently ventures away from Caer Storogal because he prefers to spend his time in the field and protecting the settlements around the War College. His frequent absences shift many students into Captain Tytos Long's care, which is an assignment many students come to rue. Long is impatient, cruel, and demanding, and he pushes his students to meet his high demands.

Captain Long emphasizes offense over defense, claiming the enemy proves no threat when it's dead. His students focus on physical development to build muscle and durability, while learning to master axes, hammers, picks, and similar weapons. Those students who Long doesn't break and drive out from Caer Storogal count themselves among the most fearsome warriors the War College creates.

Armor Feats: Losing a shield leads many players to invest in Armor Proficiency (plate) as their first

feat. The +1 AC over scale armor is a solid bonus, though you gain a check penalty. Consider how many AC-boosting feats you might wish to take. Armor Specialization (scale) at 11th level gives you +1 AC and negates the speed penalty, but combine Armor Proficiency (plate) and Armor Specialization (plate) and you come out a bit further ahead.

Durability Feats: Instead of building up your defenses to compensate for your low defenses, focus on hit points. Be sure to pick up Toughness and Durable early since you'll be blowing through healing surges at an alarming rate.

Weapon Feats: Weapon properties such as brutal and high crit can enhance a great weapon build. Brutal weapons prevent you from rolling minimum damage by letting you reroll any damage dice equal to or less than the brutal value, giving you more consistent higher damage rolls. High crit great weapons gain even more from critical hits because the base die size is bigger. Best of all, one Superior Weapon Training feat can give you both of these properties when you become proficient with the massive execution axe.

Fighter Feats

"With the proper training, you'll never miss your shield."
~Captain Tytos Long

The heart of every great weapon fighter is the two-handed weapon. The following feats provide new techniques and advantages for characters who embrace this build.

Heroic Tier Feats

Any feat in this section is available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

Brutal Tactics

Prerequisite: Fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent class feature

Benefit: While you flank an enemy and wield a two-handed weapon, the ally with whom you flank the enemy can reroll any damage die that displays a 1 when making a melee attack against the flanked enemy. The ally can reroll each die once.

Fighter Weapon Specialization

Prerequisite: Fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent class feature

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls when you hit with an attack using a weapon of the style you chose for the Fighter Weapon Talent class feature.

Forceful Opportunist

Prerequisite: Fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent class feature

Benefit: Whenever you hit a target with an opportunity attack, you can push the target 1 square and shift into the square the target vacated.

Hewing Charge

Prerequisite: Fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent class feature

Benefit: You gain a bonus to damage rolls equal to your Constitution modifier when making charge attacks while using a two-handed weapon.

Scrappy

Prerequisite: Small size

Benefit: When wielding a one-handed versatile weapon in two hands, you gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls. This bonus increases to +2 at 11th level and +3 at 21st level.

Paragon Tier Feats

Any feat in this section is available to a character of 11th level or higher who meets the other prerequisites.

Mastered Technique

Prerequisite: 11th level, fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent class feature

Benefit: You gain a +1 feat bonus to AC until the end of your next turn when you hit with an attack using a weapon of the style you chose for the Fighter Weapon Talent class feature.

Pinning Challenge

Prerequisite: 11th level, fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent class feature

Benefit: Whenever you hit a target already marked by you with a two-handed weapon and when using a basic attack, the target is also immobilized until the start of your next turn.

Steely Defense

Prerequisite: 11th level, Fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent class feature

Benefit: When you take the total defense action while wielding a two-handed weapon, any enemy that attacks you with a melee attack takes damage equal to your Strength modifier.

HEROIC TIER FEATS

Name	Prerequisite	Benefit
Brutal Tactics	Fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent	Grant flanking ally brutal 1 against flanked target
Fighter Weapon Specialization	Fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent	+1 damage with one-handed or two-handed weapons
Forceful Opportunist	Fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent	Push with opportunity attack
Hewing Charge	Fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent	Bonus to damage roll on charge attacks with two-handed weapons
Scrappy	Small	Benefit from versatile

PARAGON TIER FEATS

Name	Prerequisites	Benefit
Mastered Technique	11th level, fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent	+1 bonus to AC with hit using one-handed or two-handed weapon
Pinning Challenge	11th level, fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent	Immobilize marked targets hit with two-handed weapons
Steely Defense	11th level, fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent	Enemies take Strength modifier damage when attacking you while you take total defense while wielding a two-handed weapon

EPIC TIER FEATS

Name	Prerequisite	Benefit
Inevitable Challenge	21st level, fighter, Combat Challenge	Deal damage equal to Strength modifier with missed attack from Combat Challenge
True Reliability	21st level, fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent	+2 bonus to attack roll with missed reliable power

Epic Tier Feats

Any feat in this section is available to a character of 21st level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Inevitable Challenge

Prerequisite: 21st level, fighter, Combat Challenge class feature

Benefit: Whenever you miss with a melee basic attack from your Combat Challenge class feature, the target takes damage equal to your Strength modifier.

True Reliability

Prerequisite: 21st level, fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent class feature

Benefit: When you miss with a melee attack for a fighter power with the reliable keyword, your next attack using the same power gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll if you use it before the end of your next turn.

Fighter Powers

The following fighter powers are designed with the great weapon fighter in mind and emphasize striker as the fighter's secondary role. Many powers include an attack penalty to improve some other aspect of the power. The bonus from Fighter Weapon Talent "pays" for this penalty, making these powers particularly attractive to these fighters.

Punishing Charge — **Fighter Attack 1**

As you charge into battle, your weapon opens a path to your chosen foe.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon. You must charge and use this power in place of the melee basic attack.
Effect: Any enemy that attacks you with an opportunity attack triggered by your charge takes damage equal to your Constitution modifier.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier + Constitution modifier damage.

Savage Advance — Fighter Attack 1

Your enemy falls back beneath your savage attack, but you pursue to finish the job.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One creature
Effect: Before the attack, you slide the target 1 square, and you shift into the square the target vacated.
Attack: Strength -2 vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength + Constitution modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.

Wicked Strike — Fighter Attack 1

Your weapon might be cumbersome, but it packs quite a punch when it connects.

At-Will ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One creature marked by you
Attack: Strength -2 vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier + Constitution modifier.
Level 21: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage + twice your Constitution modifier.
Special: You can use this power in place of a melee basic attack.

Who's Next? — Fighter Utility 2

When the foe crumples, you move forward to find your next opponent.

Encounter ✦ Martial
Move Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must have reduced a nonminion enemy to 0 hit points during this turn.
Effect: You shift up to your speed and gain a bonus to your next damage roll made before the end of your next turn equal to the number of squares you moved from your starting position.

Restoring Strike — Fighter Attack 3

Your weapon impacts with a satisfying crunch, filling you with new confidence.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength -2 vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier + Constitution modifier damage, and before the end of your next turn, you can use your second wind as a minor action.

Brutal Advance — Fighter Attack 5

After throwing your enemy back, you charge to deliver the killing blow.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you push the target 3 squares.
Miss: No damage, and you push the target 3 squares.
Effect: After the attack, you can make a charge attack against the same target as a free action. If you hit with this attack, you deal extra damage equal to your Constitution modifier and the target falls prone.

Line in the Sand — Fighter Utility 6

You trace a line on the ground with your weapon, daring your enemies to cross it.

Daily ✦ Martial, Zone
Minor Action **Close** burst 1
Requirement: You must be trained in Intimidate.
Target: One creature
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter or until you leave the zone. Any enemy inside the zone grants combat advantage to you.

Inertia Strike — Fighter Attack 7

Your tremendous swing carries your weapon through one enemy and into anyone else in your reach.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength -2 vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and any enemy adjacent to you other than the target takes damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Murderous Assault — Fighter Attack 9

You slam your weapon into your foe and surge in one smooth motion to swing again at another foe.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Special: If you have combat advantage against the target, you deal extra damage equal to your Strength modifier.
Effect: You can make a charge attack against a different target.

Mighty Surge — Fighter Utility 10

You dig deep to find the strength you need to overcome your foes.

Daily ✦ Healing, Martial
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You can spend a healing surge, and you also gain a +2 power bonus to all defenses and a +1 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn. Until the end of the encounter, each time you spend a healing surge, you gain a +2 power bonus to all defenses and a +1 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Leaping Assault — Fighter Attack 13

You spring through your foes to rip apart an enemy with a savage swing.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon. You must be trained in Athletics.
Effect: Before the attack, you move up to your speed. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks from any enemy marked by you.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier + Constitution modifier damage.

Hurricane Strike — Fighter Attack 15

You swing your blade around you and the momentum carries you forward so you can do it again.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Close** burst 1
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Primary Target: Each enemy in burst that you can see
Primary Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier + Constitution modifier damage.
Effect: After the attack you can move up to 3 squares and make a secondary attack in a close burst 1.
Secondary Target: Each enemy in burst that you can see
Secondary Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: Strength modifier + Constitution modifier damage.

Warding Steel — Fighter Utility 16

You whip your weapon up to intercept your enemies' attacks.

Encounter ✦ Martial
Minor Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Effect: You gain a power bonus equal to your Constitution modifier to AC and Fortitude until the start of your next turn.

Bitter Harvest — Fighter Attack 17

You smash through the pressing host to set your eyes and your weapon on your chosen foe.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Close** burst 1
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Primary Target: Each enemy in burst
Primary Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Hit: Constitution modifier damage, and you push the target 1 squares.
Effect: You shift 1 square and make a secondary melee attack.
Secondary Target: An enemy marked by you
Secondary Attack: Strength -2 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier + Constitution modifier damage.

Toppling Finish — Fighter Attack 19

In one smooth stroke, you topple the enemy and bring your weapon back to plunge it down into its struggling body.

Daily ✦ Martial, Reliable, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Primary Target: One creature
Primary Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target falls prone.
Effect: You make a secondary attack against the same target.
Secondary Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 5[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage
Special: If the target grants combat advantage to you, your attack deals extra damage equal to 3 + your Constitution modifier.

Battle Furor — Fighter Utility 22

When you draw upon your reserves, your fury rises and adds terrible weight to your attacks.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, whenever you would regain hit points, you gain any hit points in excess of your maximum value as temporary hit points. Each time you regain hit points, you gain a bonus to your next damage roll equal to your Constitution modifier.

Slash and Kick — Fighter Attack 23

Your weapon tears through your foe, allowing you to follow up with a forceful kick to send the enemy sprawling.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One creature
Primary Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you make a secondary attack against the same target.
Secondary Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Special: If you are bloodied, you gain a +4 bonus to your attack roll.
Hit: You push the target a number of squares equal to your Constitution modifier and the target falls prone.

Time to Die — Fighter Attack 25

You've battled this enemy long enough: Putting all your strength behind the attack, you fling the foe away and then leap after it to bring the battle to a bloody close.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you push the target a number of squares equal to your Constitution modifier.
Miss: Half damage, and you push the target 2 squares.
Effect: You make a charge attack against the same target as a free action. If this attack hits, in addition to the damage from the attack, you push the target a number of squares equal to your Constitution modifier and your target falls prone.

Wild Offensive — Fighter Attack 27

Your weapon moves with astonishing speed, leaving those you strike reeling in pain.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One, two, or three creatures
Attack: Strength -2 vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier + Constitution modifier damage, and the target grants combat advantage to you until the end of your next turn.

Image of Death Fighter Attack 29

As your enemies fall beneath your blade, you become the very image of death—a menacing presence sparking terror in all who behold you.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength -2 vs. AC
Hit: 5[W] + Strength modifier + twice your Constitution modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you gain combat advantage against any enemy marked by you.

Great Weapon Master

"There's an art to handling a weapon this big."

Prerequisite: Fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent class feature

You have always found the art of wielding a great weapon appealing, and during your training you focused your efforts toward mastering its forms and techniques. Although your instructors gave you invaluable insights into using these weapons, only through field experience have you come to truly master them. In your hands, a great weapon becomes like a living thing, its bulk and weight negligible in your practiced hands. You can maneuver the weapon about you, using its size to your clear advantage.

Great Weapon Master Features

Infectious Dread (11th level): Each time you hit an enemy with a melee attack using a two-handed weapon, one other enemy adjacent to you takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against you until the end of your next turn. Creatures immune to fear do not take this penalty.

Parrying Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you also gain a +2 bonus to AC until the end of your next turn.

Opening Seized (16th level): Whenever an enemy you have marked misses you with an attack, your next attack before the end of your next turn deals extra damage equal to your Constitution modifier against that enemy.

Great Weapon Master Exploits

Grim Warning Great Weapon Master Attack 11

A vicious strike from your weapon reminds the enemy why attacking you is such a bad idea.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Immediate Reaction **Melee** weapon
Trigger: An enemy hits or misses you with a melee attack
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: The triggering enemy
Attack: Strength -2 vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier + Constitution modifier damage.

Blocking Maneuver Great Weapon Master Utility 12

Adjusting your grip, you move your weapon to intercept the attack.

Encounter ✦ Martial
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Trigger: An enemy you have marked makes an attack against you
Effect: You end the mark to gain a +4 bonus to AC and Reflex until the end of your next turn.
Special: You cannot mark this enemy until the end of your next turn.

Scattering Strike Great Weapon Master Attack 20

After delivering a crippling strike to your foe, you reverse the weapon to clear yourself some space.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).
Effect: You push each adjacent creature other than the target 2 squares.

SIEGEBREAKER

"This? This is bonebreaker. Let me introduce him to you."

Prerequisite: Fighter, Fighter Weapon Talent class feature

You might have trained at a fighting school or served in a military outfit, but you found all that discipline and all that rigorous training unnecessary. You see no finesse in swinging an axe. You hit someone and they fall. If they don't fall, you're doing it wrong—a problem corrected by just hitting them harder next time. Some warriors sneer at you, dismissing your accomplishments as luck, but the veterans know the truth: You are a killing machine. That's why they call you the siegebreaker. Oh, not because you are good at driving enemies off, but because you are damn good at punching holes through your enemies' defenses and bringing stalemates to sudden, bloody ends.

Siegebreaker Features

Bonerender (11th level): Once per round, when you make a melee attack using a two-handed weapon against an enemy granting combat advantage to you, your attack deals extra damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Brutal Action (11th level): When you hit with a melee attack using a two-handed weapon, you can spend an action point to gain a +1[W] bonus to the damage roll. At 21st level, this extra damage increases to +2[W].

You're Next (16th level): Every time you reduce a nonminion enemy to 0 hit points, one enemy within 5 squares of you grants combat advantage to you until the end of your next turn.

Siegebreaker Exploits

Bitter Strike Siegebreaker Attack 11

So fierce is your attack that your enemy panics, ignoring your allies for one disastrous moment.

Encounter ✦ Fear, Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target grants combat advantage to all attackers until the end of your next turn.

Brutal Momentum Siegebreaker Utility 12

Your attacks fall with such fury that your enemy cannot possibly defend against them all.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, whenever you hit an enemy with an at-will attack power using a two-handed weapon, your next attack against that enemy gains +2 power bonus to the attack roll.

Shattering Blow Siegebreaker Attack 20

Your weapon crashes into the foe, splitting it wide and leaving it gasping as its vitality sprays the air.

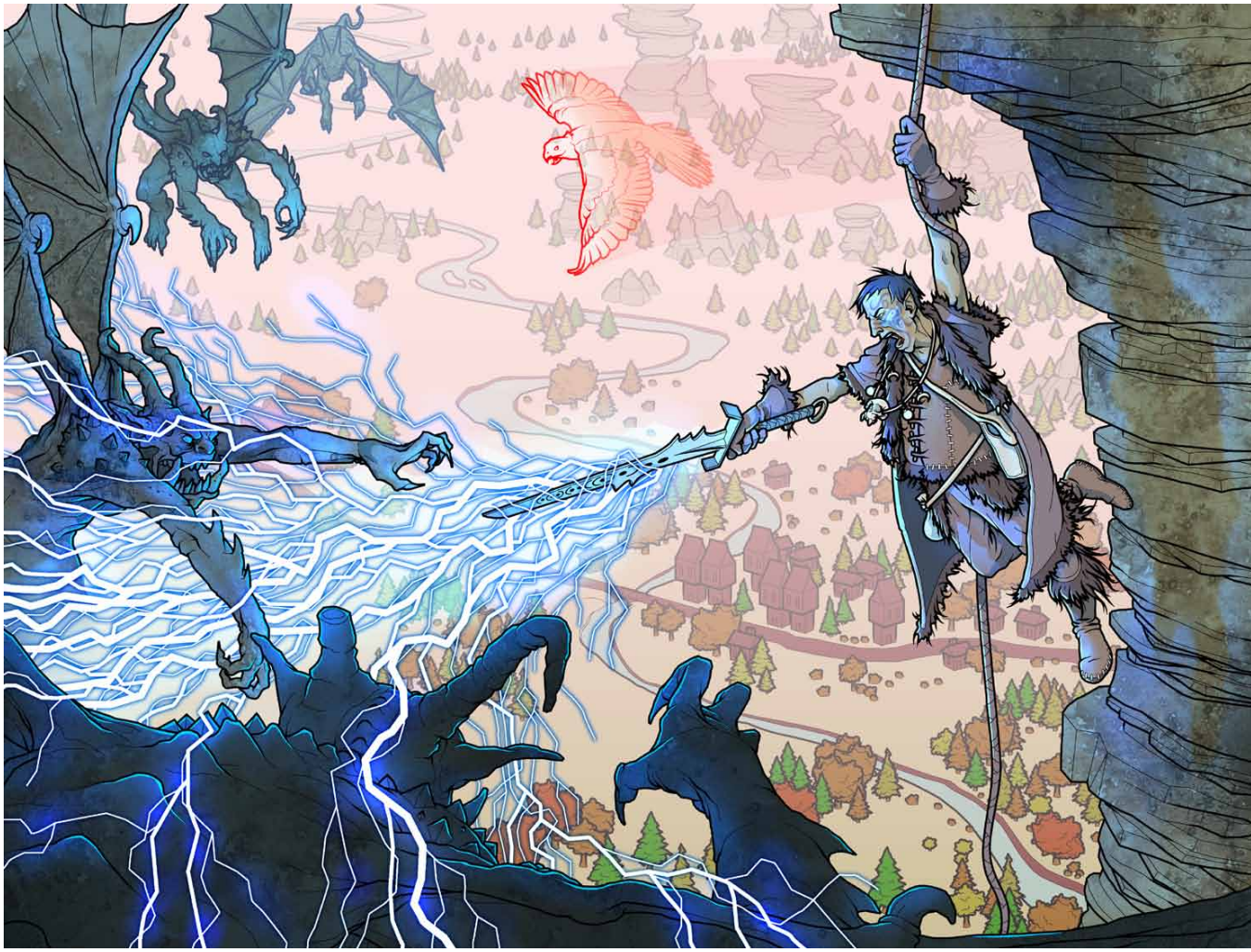
Daily ✦ Martial, Reliable, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a two-handed weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target is dazed and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).
Special: If the target granted combat advantage to you, it also falls prone.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb is a freelance game designer with numerous design and development credits to his name. His most recent works include the *Divine Power*, *Eberron® Player's Guide*, *Eberron Campaign Guide*, *Player's Handbook 2*, *P2 Demon Queen's Enclave*, *Manual of the Planes*, *Martial Power*, *Draconomicon I: Chromatic Dragons*, the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*, and numerous articles in *Dragon®* and *Dungeon®* magazines. Robert lives in Tennessee with his wife Stacee and his paratrooper battle cats.

Adventurers of the Realms: Displaced Lands and Dire Frontiers

By Chris Tulach
Illustrations by Mike Faille
Cartography by Rob Lazzaretti



THE Forgotten Realms® is a vast place, and heroes can emerge from anywhere, rising from their commonplace lives to thwart danger and show remarkable courage. The Forgotten Realms Player's Guide offers a large selection of backgrounds for player characters, each one tied to a region. These backgrounds give a player inspiration for determining their character's place in the world, as well as a regional benefit.

This article is part of a series to expand character options by providing new feats and paragon paths for the different regional backgrounds. In this installment, we highlight three southern Faerûnian regions that have been vastly altered since the Spellplague in cataclysmic ways. More information on Akanûl, East Rift, and Tymanther can be found in the Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide and the Forgotten Realms Player's Guide. While the material in this article was written specifically for use in a Forgotten Realms campaign, you can easily adapt it to your own campaign no matter where it's set.

The feats presented here can flesh out your background by providing possible occupations prior to your adventuring life. The paragon paths have a dual class requirement; you can satisfy both class requirements by possessing one class and selecting a multiclass feat for the other, or through the new hybrid class rules featured in *Player's Handbook 3*.

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Akanûl

Many years ago, the land now known as Akanûl violently arrived on Toril, plucked from the world known as Abeir. While the Spellplague raged, a portion of the realm called Shyr supplanted the area of western Chessenta. The transported Shyrans, predominantly genasi, threw off the yoke of oppression they had endured while on Abeir and renamed their new home Akanûl.

Although Akanûl is mostly untamed frontier, its shining beacon of civilization is Airspur, a grand city filled with elemental spires and floating districts connected by a network of bridges and walkways. Many folk there find the heights comforting and have learned how to walk away from falls that would leave others with broken limbs.

At the edge of the realm of Akanûl lies the Chondalwood, a lush, tangled jungle that absorbed the energies of the Spellplague and proliferated junglemotes throughout the surrounding area. The heart of the jungle is staunchly defended against interlopers by a group of elves in an enclave known as Wildhome. Mystics who plumb the depths of the Chondalwood seek to unlock the mysteries of the Spellplague and reconnect with the jungle's numerous fey denizens.

More on Airspur

The capital city of Akanûl is futher detailed in two recent installments entitled "Explore Airspur", featured in *Dragon* #377 and #378. The first installment gives a detailed overview of this unique settlement, while the second focuses on villains and antagonists that might be encountered in the city,

Heroic Tier Feats

The following feats are available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

Airspur Windrider

Prerequisites: Akanûl regional background

Benefit: You subtract 10 feet from the total distance fallen before determining damage after a fall.

Chondalwood Mystic

Prerequisites: Akanûl regional background

Benefit: You possess Spellplague sense. You know when you're within 5 squares of something touched by the Spellplague (an area of Spellplague, a plaguechanged creature, or a creature with a spellscar). You can sense the presence of the source, but not the direction or distance.

You also gain a +2 feat bonus on Nature checks.

Paragon Path

Shyran Spiritblade

"My blade's edge is keen, but my spirit's power can cut just as deeply."

Prerequisites: Shaman and swordmage, Akanûl regional background

In the days of old Shyr, the practices of the swordmage were forbidden to all but the favored of the ruling primordial Karshimis. Many genasi, however, took to the wilds outside of civilization to learn their

ancestral craft in secret. Deep in the wilds, some of these students found masters that had become sympathetic with the primal world, carrying on an ancient discipline that blended arcane prowess with primal resonance. You have carried on this tradition, calling your spirit ally to your mystic blade, resulting in a fighting style unknown to almost all others on Toril.

You have an intense bond to both your blade and your spirit friend, such that both have become inseparable from you. You often act as an emissary between the wilds of the frontier and the learned halls of civilization, spending time in both worlds. Your balanced upbringing means others often rely upon you to be the source of stability when things go awry.

Shyran Spiritblade Features

Spiritblade's Action (11th level): Whenever you spend an action point to take an extra action, enemies adjacent to your spirit companion are marked by you until the end of your next turn.

Shyran Spirit Warding (11th level): When your spirit companion is adjacent to you, you gain a +1 bonus to Fortitude, Reflex, and Will defenses.

Totem Blade (11th level): You can use a light blade or heavy blade as an implement for your shaman powers and shyran spiritblade powers.

Unbreakable Bond (16th level): If your spirit would disappear as a result of damage dealt to it, as a free action, you may instead take the damage and if you do, your spirit companion is unaffected by the attack.

Shyran Spiritblade Powers

Spirit Beckoned Shyran Spiritblade Attack 11

As you strike your foe with your blade, your spirit companion senses its weakness.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence or Wisdom vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Intelligence or Wisdom modifier damage.
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, you gain a +2 power bonus on attack rolls with spirit powers against the target, and a successful attack knocks the target prone.

One with the Blade Shyran Spiritblade Utility 12

You coax your spirit companion into your blade, making your attacks more precise.

Daily ✦ Primal, Spirit
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Your spirit companion disappears. You may spend a healing surge, and you gain a +2 power bonus to melee weapon attacks until the end of the encounter or until you next use call spirit companion.

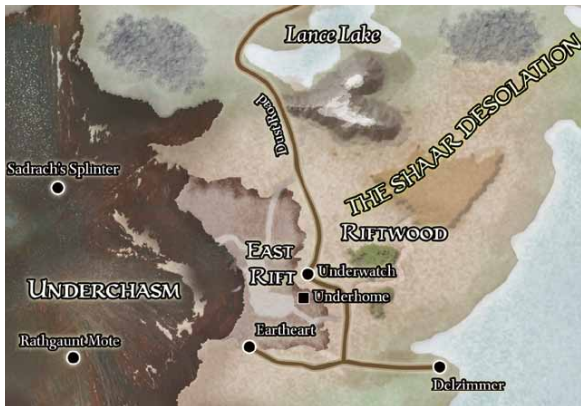
Spiritspell Assault Shyran Spiritblade Attack 20

You charge your blade with arcane energy, and as you strike, you focus another spell through your spirit companion.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Force, Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Primary Attack: Intelligence vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Intelligence modifier force damage.
Effect: Make a secondary attack with one of your swordmage at-will attack powers, as if you were in your sprit companion's square.

East Rift

During the Spellplague, the dwarven realm known as the Great Rift underwent a cataclysmic event. A large portion of the land fell deep into the Underdark, creating a massive cavity known as Underchasm. The remainder of the kingdom, known as East Rift, serves as a bulwark against the terrors of the Underdark that



occasionally creep up through the Underchasm.

Eartheart serves as the fortified capital of East Rift. It is built along cliff sides with narrow, switchback stairs and griffon ferries providing the primary means of mobility between various districts of the city. One of these districts, Hammergate, is the foreign quarter of the city and the source of much trade and intrigue. Many nondwarf adventurers from East Rift hail from its bustling streets.

East Rift's primary lookout for Underchasm is a fortress known as Underwatch, which lies near the partially overrun former dwarven stronghold of Underhome. Expeditions into the Underchasm are launched from the garrison town but the folk that live in it are wary of Underdark spies and infiltrators, so patrols are strictly screened by vigilant guards both before and after an expedition.

Heroic Tier Feats

The following feats are available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

Hammergate Conniver

Prerequisites: East Rift regional background

Benefit: When you succeed on a Bluff check, gain a +3 bonus to your next Diplomacy or Intimidate check in the encounter.

Underwatch Vigilant

Prerequisites: East Rift regional background

Benefit: You may reroll any monster knowledge check made to identify or gain information on a creature of the aberrant origin, keeping the second result.

You also gain a +2 feat bonus on Insight checks.

Paragon Path

Underchasm Darkwatcher

"I bear the gifts of the earth and power from beyond this realm, and with these weapons, I am a most formidable foe."

Prerequisites: Warden and warlock, East Rift regional background

Not all that lived in the western Great Rift perished during the calamity that resulted in the creation of the Underchasm. Some managed to survive in small, isolated groups by keeping themselves one step ahead of the drow and other Underdark horrors that prowl the depths. Vowing to defend their heritage at all costs, many of these deep earth dwellers made pacts of power to keep their kind safe and strike back at the creeping evils on the edges of their enclaves. You have chosen this path, becoming a stalwart protector of your kind, but it was not without sacrifice that you came to your power.

You have emerged from the depths of the Underchasm and have seen and heard terrible things that few others have experienced firsthand. Your dark connection to entities beyond this world has steeled your resolve to fight against the enemies of your people, and your bond with the earth is unbreakable. You serve as a valuable guide when your group heads underground, but you're also a very capable protector when the time comes to fight, steeled by years of a harsh, lightless existence.

Underchasm Darkwatcher Path Features

Stoneform Curse (11th level): Whenever you spend an action point to take an extra action, creatures under your Warlock's Curse are also marked.

Pierce the Darkness (11th level): You gain darkvision. If you already possess darkvision, you gain a +2 bonus to Perception checks.

Darkstone Tendrils (16th level): You gain combat advantage against an enemy that is both cursed by you and marked by you.

Underchasm Darkwatcher Powers

Deepdark Strike
Underchasm Darkwatcher Attack 11

Your weapon is wreathed in an impenetrable blackness, which darkens your enemy's eyes when you strike.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Constitution vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Constitution modifier damage, and the target is blinded until the end of your next turn.

Cursefire Light
Underchasm Darkwatcher Utility 12

Your body is ablaze in an eerie green flame that feeds off your curses, bolstering you.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, whenever an enemy cursed by you hits you with an attack, you can choose to gain 5 temporary hit points or make a saving throw.

Form of the Umber Hulk
Underchasm Darkwatcher Attack 20

Your eyes take on an insectlike appearance, you sprout antennae from atop your head, and a pair of sharp mandibles grows out from your mouth. At the moment you choose, you can gaze upon your enemies and sow confusion in their ranks.

Daily ✦ Polymorph, Primal
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You assume the guardian form of the umber hulk. While you are in this form, you gain a +2 power bonus to AC and Fortitude defense. In addition, you also gain tremorsense 5 and a burrow speed of 2.
Once during this encounter, you can make the following attack while you are in this form.
Standard Action **Close** blast 3
Target: Each enemy in blast
Attack: Constitution or Charisma vs. Will
Hit: Target slides 1 square and is dazed (save ends).
Miss: Target slides 1 square.

Tymanther

Tymanchebar, like Shyr, was ripped from Abeir during the Spellplague and came crashing down on the former realm of Unther. After realizing that they had been separated from their ancient foe, the Empress Dragon of Skelkor, and no longer had to endure hardships under the cruelties of that dragon empire, these newly-freed dragonborn set about creating a new nation which they named Tymanther.

Today, the realm is still dominated by the ancestors of the Abeiran dragonborn. They have constructed a cyclopean citadel-city to serve as the capital of Tymanther, called Djerad Thymar. While it serves as the cultural nexus for the dragonborn on Faerûn, it is well known for its military schools on tactics, engineering, and unconventional warfare—particularly dragon-fighting.

Far away from the grand design of the capital, a small village known as Ruinspoke serves as a waypoint for trade as well as a base for adventurers who scrounge through the nearby ruins of Unther. While few settle here, many pass through in hopes of discovering valuable relics of antiquity that can be sold for considerable sums to sages and historians in other parts of Faerûn. Indeed, the folk in the area have become expert at collecting worn and used pieces of junk and assembling them into items of worth.

Heroic Tier Feats

The following feats are available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

Ruinspoke Scrounger

Prerequisites: Tymanther regional background

Benefit: Once per day, when you miss on an attack roll with an alchemical item, roll a d20. On a result of 10 or higher, that item is not expended and can be retrieved at the end of the encounter.

Thymaran Engineer

Prerequisites: Tymanther regional background

Benefit: You may reroll any skill check made as a countermeasure to a trap, keeping the second result.

Paragon Path

Dragonfoe Ragespell

"The fury in my blood strengthens both my body and my mind."

Prerequisites: Barbarian and sorcerer, Tymanther regional background

While the dragonborn suffered under the reign of the Empress Dragon of Skelkor, many were left adrift in the world, their families and homes taken from them without warning or care. Some of these dragonborn from the tribes at the fringes of civilization learned to awaken their latent magic and fuel their primal fury with arcane power. Becoming the scourge of dragons and their allies, these relentless warriors lived to bring down their prey. In time, they taught their secrets to tribes of other races that also suffered under draconic rule. You are one of their kind, a dragonfoe ragespell, a cauldron of rage and power set upon a mission to rid the world of the creatures that once enslaved your people.

You blend the primal fury of your tribe's roots with your innate manipulation of arcane forces to become the ultimate big game hunter. You prefer to take on your sworn enemy—dragons—but your abilities lend themselves well to bringing down any big threat your group might face. You take many risks getting up close to creatures that tower above you, but you know that without fully giving into the fury that constantly smolders within you, there would be no future for your tribe.

Dragonfoe Ragespell Path Features

Ragespell's Action (11th level): If you spend an action point to take an attack action against a single target, you deal 1d10 extra damage or deal 2d10 extra damage if the target is size Large or larger.

Sorcerous Rage (11th level): When you are raging, your sorcerer at-will attack powers deal an extra 1d6 damage and score critical hits on a natural roll of 19 or 20.

Sorcerer's Rampage (16th level): Whenever you score a critical hit, you may use a sorcerer at-will attack power as a free action. This replaces any attack you might have from the Rampage barbarian class feature.

Dragonfoe Ragespell Powers

Sorcerer's Fury Dragonfoe Ragespell Attack 11

A burst of energy erupts from your blade as you plunge it into your enemy, pushing away those near it.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee weapon**
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength force damage, and all creatures adjacent to the target are pushed 2 squares.

Resilient Denial Dragonfoe Ragespell Utility 12

After you are hit by a particularly devastating attack, you channel your fury and attune your arcane energies to resist another such strike.

Daily ✦ Arcane
Immediate Reaction **Personal**
Trigger: An attack bloodies you.
Effect: Choose one of the following damage types: acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison, or thunder damage. You gain resist 15 against that damage type until the end of the encounter.

Arcane Overload Dragonfoe Ragespell Attack 20

You charge your weapon with crackling arcane power. When your attack lands, the foe is awash in an explosion of withering energy, and the residual energy envelops your weapon.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee weapon**
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage and the target is weakened (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The next time you hit with a weapon power before the end of your next turn, you can use a sorcerer at-will or encounter attack power as a free action that does not provoke opportunity attacks.

About the Author

Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, **Chris Tulach** actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has become the D&D Organized Play Content Developer, responsible for the development and deployment of Dungeons & Dragons® organized play programs. He is also the co-author of E2 *Kingdom of the Ghouls*.

Character Classes

By Mike Mearls
Illustrations byWillam O'Conner

Building a new character class is the most difficult design task in D&D®. A class is the largest single design piece in the game. It consists of everything from new powers and class features to basic stuff like weapon proficiencies, skill lists, and hit point progressions. In a way, designing a class is like building a narrative and mechanical universe for a gamer to play around in. Someone might play a class across 30 levels, probably about 400 hours of gaming. Needless to say, that's a bit more pressure on a designer than writing up a single feat!

While good class design is a difficult task, there are a few key, guiding principles that can help you build an interesting class.

1. Justify Your Existence

The first step to building a new class is the simplest one, but it's also the most important. Simply put, why build a new class? It's important to have a clear, compelling answer to this question. It's also easy to mess this one up by letting what looks like a good idea lead to bad design.

At this step, you need to look at all the other classes in the game and figure out where your class fits in. Does it have an interesting story hook? Do you have a compelling new mechanic in mind that this class can use? This is the elevator pitch that you're using to convince players to check out the class. If it fails, nobody wants to play your class. What's the point in designing it?

I call upon spirits that follow me into battle. They stand beside my as stalwart allies.

Good Justifications

A good justification achieves two things. It creates a clear image of the class in your mind, and that image sits alongside the other classes without becoming lost in the crowd. On top of that, it has a visceral punch that makes people want to play it.

The avenger class started out with this summary: "I'm the avenging blade of the gods – Batman with a holy symbol."

The shaman: "I call upon spirits that follow me into battle. They stand beside my as stalwart allies."

The monk: "I don't just attack a monster. I leap over it and, while in mid air, put my fist through its skull from above."

The assassin: "I'm a creature of the Shadowfell that will strangle you with your own shadow."

As you can see, none of these opening statements mentions role or other fiddly, mechanical bits. At this stage, you want to create a clear, vivid image of the character class. In some ways, you're creating the iconic character for that class.

A good statement is your argument to players for why they should play your class. It explains why the class is interesting.

Bad Justifications

You can't have the good without the bad, and it's easy to fall flat on your face at this step. A weak opening statement leads to either a mushy, poorly conceived character class or, if you eventually catch your mistake down the line, a lot of reworking to bring some clarity and interesting, compelling hooks to the class. Bad statements tend to focus on details or dwell too much on making the class unique in ways that are dull. If a power source and a role appear as key, defining traits in your opening statement, then you're probably in trouble. Sure, a martial controller might be an interesting idea, but people don't play D&D to explore the intersection of a role with a power source. They want interesting characters, not labels arranged in a new order!

Players want to be mighty fighters, cunning rogues, and powerful psions. Those concepts evoke interesting images, not just bundles of mechanics. Things like role and power source are useful identifiers in the game, but they're design tools. They're not the chrome that excites players.

A bad opening statement fails to build a clear, exciting picture of the class. It might hint at something interesting, but it doesn't deliver it. It's an elevator pitch that falls flat.

2. Know Your Destination

Once you have a good opening statement, it's time to start building the class's features and the core themes to its powers. At this point, it's a good idea to create a prototype of a 10th-level character in the class as an exercise in laying down what the class should do in terms of powers and features.

The goal of this exercise is to build broad themes. At this stage of the design, we know what the class is. Now we need to know, what does this class do? Jot down some basic power ideas that capture the class, and then think about how those ideas can translate into themes and multiple powers across different levels.

A class should have a few types of abilities that enforce your opening statement:

- **A Nifty Trick:** What does this class do that other classes wish they could do? This ability might relate to its role, but it doesn't need to. As an example, assassins can teleport through shadows. A warden is so durable that it saves at the start of its turn. This trick should be something that the class can do at-will.

- **A New Type of Power:** The class should have powers that are new or should use its powers in a way that feels different and interesting. An avenger creates zones that isolate him and his chosen foe. A druid has a mix of melee attacks while in beast form and area and close attacks when in humanoid form. Psionic characters fuel their powers with points.

- **A Coherent Theme:** The class's powers should all make sense when they are explained in terms of the game world. If the character in a novel was a member of the class, its abilities should all have a common theme and connecting story element. This is a subtle point, but it's important to help define the character class.

Those three points apply to class features and powers. Ideally, a class's features allow it to fill its role while also showing off why the class is interesting. The powers then extend the basic structure created by the features.

There are some warning signs to look at for at this stage:

- The class does the same thing over and over again. You need to broaden the class or find a way to add more builds to it. If your power concepts are all variations on a single, narrow theme, you need to find more themes.

- If you played the class without telling everyone else you had a new class, would they notice? If not, the class needs a more interesting, direct theme, mechanic, or ability that shows off its unique abilities in play.

- None of the class's abilities make sense without linking them to everything else. It's possible that

the class is too complicated. This might be OK if playtesting shows that things work fine, but a good class has abilities that are interesting and fun on their own. The total package needs to be interesting, but the individual toys should also be fun.

3. Limits Inspire Creativity

Up above, I described a character class as a sort of universe that a player gets to mess around in. Because D&D is a group game, you can't build a class that does everything. That undermines the concept of teamwork and makes your class too good. In fact, the right limits help to further define the class and make it more interesting.

Some limits are imposed by the basic needs of role. A striker usually shouldn't have an AC that's too high, otherwise the party doesn't need a defender. The one exception would be if the class also has shades of a different role. Thus, a striker that tends toward defender might wear heavy armor and have respectable hit points, but a striker shaded with controller should be limited to light armor and average hit points.

This rule is particularly useful when it comes to powers. A unique mechanic or structure of powers makes a class memorable, but a gap in an array of powers is just as memorable and interesting, particularly if another class fills that hole.

If you find your class's power list starting to sprawl into incoherence, your class might suffer from a weak opening statement. Its core concept might also be a bit too narrow to sustain an entire class. You either need to refine your statement or find a way to broaden it a little.

A good limit provides an interesting cue for the character and provokes design that dovetails from it. The avenger is a great example of this process. Early on, we decided that we wanted to keep the avenger out of armor. That suggested a fast, mobile, stealthy weapon of the gods, rather than an armored knight or a crusading warrior. We cast him as a monk (in the non-martial arts sense) and that helped kick off a series of discussions and ideas that led to the final class.

Extremes help here, rather than mincing, vague generalities. Push your class into a corner, and then see how it grows to fit its limited space. In some cases, this is also a good method to help differentiate builds within a class.

If you're alone, you're dead. If your friends show up to help, that only makes things worse for you

Here are some limitations that R&D has used in the past to make classes more distinct:

Invoker: I get my biggest blasts when you hurt my friends.

Avenger: If you're alone, you're dead. If your friends show up to help, that only makes things worse for you.

Druid: I'm most effective if I dart between melee and ranged attacks.

Assassin: I'm brittle, but good luck spotting me.

Wizard: I don't need armor or hit points. I'll stop you dead in your tracks before you can reach me.

These sorts of limitations help mold how a player uses the class, and they also push the class into becoming one piece of the larger party.

Putting It All Together

No simple list of design rules or ideas will ever make it easy to design a good class. It's a lot of work, and don't be surprised if you end up tossing out as many ideas as you keep. If you have a good concept and a clear destination, though, all that effort has a much better chance of yielding something interesting.

About the Author

Mike Mearls is the Lead Designer for the Dungeons & Dragons® roleplaying game. His recent credits include H1: *Keep on the Shadowfell*™ and *Player's Handbook*® 2.

Dating & Dragons

BY SHELLY MAZZANOBLE
illustrations by William O'Conner

My good friend Paul needs help. He's polite, funny, Jeopardy-contestant smart and boy band cute. He also claims he's been trying to figure out the dating scene since he was four, and judging from his battle scars and war stories I'm inclined to believe him.

My good friend Paul needs help.

He's polite, funny, Jeopardy-contestant smart and boy band cute. He also claims he's been trying to figure out the dating scene since he was four, and judging from his battle scars and war stories I'm inclined to believe him.

Paul has tried all avenues hoping they'd lead to "the one." Online, offline, blind dates, blind fate. He's not so much interested in settling down into holy matrimony as he is in calling off the search.

"This is exhausting," he told me one day over coffee. "If I have to fill out one more about me profile, my computer is going through the window."

Incidentally, most of the laptops I spied around the coffee shop were set to one dating service or another with most of the fingers banging away on the keyboards attached to men. No sense in pointing that out to Paul. He had enough to worry about without comparing himself to the back of the heads of all his competition.

"Maybe you should take a break from it," I suggested, thinking about the old adage of finding what you're looking for when you stop looking.

"That only works for highway exits and socks," Paul said.

I have found that to be true.

Because Paul was in extra bad shape, I let him eat half my Danish. The topics moved on to movies, books, and eventually D&D.

"Man," he lamented. "People think D&D has a lot of complex rules? They should try dating."

I suspect many have and most would agree with Paul. At least with D&D there are rules. Books full of them. And while the "dating" aisle of a bookstore is jam packed with books offering their own rules, they often contradict one another.

Be aloof!

Be aggressive!

Play by The Rules!

Don't play games!

It's enough to make a grown man... cry?

"Holy cow, Paul, are you crying?" I asked.

He responded with the international sign for choking—wrapping his splayed hands around his neck. "Help?" he managed to eek out.

Laughing when the person across from me is choking is just one of the many reasons no has listed me as their emergency contact. It's also why I can't play a cleric. Fortunately, my laissez-faire approach to healing also made Paul laugh which in turn dislodged the Danish.

We parted shortly after, but I continued to think of Paul and his plea for help. This wasn't just about the cheese Danish. He, like so many others, needs help in another area.

What if dating did have rules? Even better, what if D&D rules applied to dating?

Some rules already do. Think about that guy who's a sucker for tall, thin model types with an IQ equal to the average daily temperature of Siberia. He's blinded. Or the girl who continues to date losers, despite her friends' firsthand arguments of why she needs to dump him. She's deafened. Or what about the girl who gets all tongue-tied and clammy in the presence of Wil Wheaton and would have passed out into a pile of advanced reading copies if she weren't paralyzed in fear? Yep. I – I mean she—was petrified.

Wouldn't it be great if you could make a skill check before you actually hit on someone? Drunk frat guy: DC 4. Sober sorority snob: DC 25. Knowing isn't just half the battle. It's the whole battle. Just imagine the hit points you could spare.

And how much more confident would you feel showing up to a blind date with a shield? Maybe some bracers for your feelings? Asking someone for a date wouldn't be so traumatic, would it?

I'm no relationship expert, but I am a procrastinator with a deadline so I've decided to come up with my own set of rules to help navigate the Be-Mine field known as dating. And I know just the person to help—a self-proclaimed authority who is never shy when it comes to unsolicited advice.

"Hi Mom," I said, calling at my usual time. Unfortunately it's also Law and Order's usual time.

"Why do you always call when my show is on?" she answered in typical fashion. "You either better be in an ambulance or waiting for one in a ditch."

Don't be alarmed. Judy's not heartless. My evening phone call is more regular than the changing of the guard, so she must think I'm just calling to talk about recipes or who guest-hosted on The View.

"Why do you always call when my show is on?" she answered in typical fashion. "You either better be in an ambulance or waiting for one in a ditch."

"Law and Order is on approximately 37 times a day, so conflict is inevitable," I reminded her. "Besides, I need some dating advice."

That's enough to cut off Sam Waterson. "I thought you'd never ask."

Before I can explain further, she kicked things off with her favorite rule: put yourself out there.

"That's actually pretty dangerous in D&D," I said. "Especially if you're a squishy wizard. You should really stay in the background and let those who can handle things take the brunt."

"Typical," she said. "Remember 7th grade when you let your supposed best friend dance with Todd Putter, and next thing you know they're dating for three years? You loved Todd Putter!"

Must we go there? Jeesh. I can still feel the sting of my braces cutting into my upper lip from fake smiling as I watched them dance over the gymnasium floor to Almost Paradise.

Maybe we'll come back to Judy's advice later. No need for all of us to feel bad about ourselves. But before we turn The Player's Handbook into a Playa's Handbook, here are some basics to remember.

SECRETS ARE FOR SQUIRRELS

While Dungeon Masters have the ability to keep their rolls private (and we trust them why?), the rest of us have to lay it all out in the open. Believe me, I've tried claiming 6's to be 9's, and watched fellow group members nudge the playmat a fraction of a second upon realizing they rolled a 1, but it's no use. New DM has the eyes of a beholder and every one of them will call us out.

Most of us only have two eyes and a pair of ears (if we're lucky), and apparently that's not enough to decipher your beloved's true intentions. Take Paul again. He went on—what he perceived to be—a great first date with a girl named Amy. She claimed to be "normal," and "mature," and "not a fan of the stupid games that surround relationships." Paul was relieved. Finally! He could be himself and not worry about how Chapter 3 of whatever dating book she was reading was going to contradict him.

Paul sent Amy a text message following the date reiterating how great it was to meet her and how he was looking forward to date number two. But alas... there wasn't going to be a second date. Amy wrote

Paul off claiming he was "too aggressive." That's right. The normal, mature, not-into-dating-games woman was threatened by a text message. Good riddance, I say.

START SEEING THINGS

In D&D it's good to use minis and battle grids to visualize the action. With dating the same is true, except that you don't have props. And I mean it. No props. If your date is not a D&D player, busting out your minis and telling them all about your tiefling warlord is not a turn-on. Trust me. But back to the action.

Judy is a big believer that visualization leads to fruition. The visions of triple red sevens dancing in her head as I write this is the only explanation I have for why she brings home so many oversized checks from upstate New York casinos. Before you even land a date, visualizing the action can position you to take advantage of opportunities and be ready for hidden obstacles.

"The world is your battle grid." (Thanks, Judy.) How so? Well, leering from behind a corner does not scream 'approach me!' so remember it's just as important to position yourself in such a location that offers you concealment from being obvious but still granting you full view of your subjects.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

No one likes a surprise round in D&D. Usually it means you failed your perception check or, in the case of my group, forgot to do one. Hidden enemies abound in the dating world! That subject you've been casing? You may not be alone.

"You think you're the only one with eyes?" Judy asked me once about my dog's painfully cute vet. "If he's that good-looking, believe me, you've already got competition."

I hate competition almost as much as dogs hate thermometers.

My point? Don't let an enemy surprise you and move on in your action! Be ready to strike at a moment's notice. Sure, it may provoke an oppy, but who cares? If you succeed, the reward will be much sweeter. All's fair in love and war.

"You think you're the only one with eyes?" Judy asked me once about my dog's painfully cute vet. "If he's that good-looking, believe me, you've already got competition."

GETTING SOME ACTION

Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but you have to take some actions to get some action. Judy wants you to put yourself out there, but 'out there' doesn't mean putting your paralyzed self in the path of a big rig. Here are your options.

Free actions include a look, a wink (cheesy but I can't stop you), a smile or a wave. Although these actions are free, make sure you use them sparingly. You don't want to be that guy.

Do people still buy strangers drinks? If so, that's considered a minor action. So would offering a girl your chair in a crowded bar (I love this one because I'm very lazy and usually wearing heels).

Judy likes to say "move it or lose it" but that's usually in regard to slow drivers and grocery shoppers who leave their carts in the center of the aisles. She's not messing around and neither should you. Plotting your move action is very important. Just as the name implies, move actions let you either position yourself to a more desirable location, like closer to your subject—or, if you're so bold, you may have already readied an action and walked right up to them. But what to do when you get there?

We all look forward to standard actions during game play, but in the realm of dating—hello, they're scary! This includes horrible things like talking, asking for a phone number, introducing yourself and enduring/using cheesy pick up lines. Sorry. Most turns have to include a standard action unless you want to be perpetually free.

LEAVE YOUR MARK

A girlfriend of mine had tickets to a comedy show, so she brought this guy she was interested in. "Interested" is the key word here. They weren't technically dating although they had been out quite a few times in what most would construe as romantic-inspired situations. Anyway, the guy ends up giving his number

to the waitress at the club, right in front of my friend! He didn't think there was anything wrong with this. "What do you have to do to a guy to make him realize you're on a date?" she asked.

"You should mark him," I said.

This of course was lost on her as she's not a D&D player, but I may have converted her after explaining what I meant.

"A marked target will automatically take damage should he or she hit on another target."

"Brilliant," she said. "From now on I'm bringing a Property Of stamp and a scarlet colored ink pad on all my dates."

And yes, gentlemen, she's still available.

WINGING IT

Having back-up is a great idea both on and off the battle grid. In D&D it's called flanking. In dating, it's called having a wingman. Here's a tactic I don't recommend you try at home:

Guy 1 is interested in Girl, so he enlists the help of Guy 2. Guy 1 and Girl go out to a bar; once there, Guy 2 (already at the bar) fake chokes on the cherry in his whiskey sour so Guy 1 can "save" him and look like a hero to Girl. All goes as planned until Guy 1 and Guy 2 burst into giggles the second Guy 1's arms encircle Guy 2's waist. Girl believes that if Guy 1 needs to employ such juvenile tactics to win her affection, he's clearly not the guy for her. Neither guy looks like a hero.

Maybe the intentions were good, but the execution was terrible. If Guy 1 had an action point, that would have been a good time to use it.

If Girl had a wingman instead, perhaps he or she would have tried bull rush to rid Girl of Guy 1 (and Guy 2 for that matter, who's probably not above hitting on an unmarked subject) before their half-ass drama went down. All good wingmen/women have probably needed to use bull rush.... unfortunately most rolls result in a critical fail.

"What do you have to do to a guy to make him realize you're on a date?" she asked. "You should mark him," I said.

SEALING THE DEAL

Another friend was dating a really great guy. He was smart and funny and as focused on her as a service dog is focused on his master. Yet she wasn't 100% confident he was ready to commit. This guy was also a huge football fan and talked about opening day of the season with the same enthusiasm and fervor that she'd surely be talking about their pending nuptials one day. So she delivered a coup de grace in the shape of showing up at his house on opening day to cook him football-shaped French toast (I know!) with mini Dallas Cowboy flags (sort of the metaphorical flag she was sticking in his helpless body) perched atop the powdered sugar-covered pile of sweet, syrupy goodness. Not wanting to disrupt his game-watching juju, she left after breakfast but not before popping a homemade lasagna in the oven for later.

Poor guy. He never had a chance. Thank goodness this one worked out. Who wants to compete with football-shaped toast?

THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR

Here's a great Judy-ism: Build a bridge and get over it. If only it were that easy. And if we played by D&D rules, it would be. Just knowing that Tabitha has good friends with healing powers makes her a little extra confident in combat. Maybe too confident sometimes. Why not get yourself some cover, Tabby, instead of using all your move actions to chase gnolls around the playmat with your flaming sphere? But I digress. You may not have healing surges in real life, but you might have friends. That's what they're for.

Dating can be overwhelming, sure. But just like D&D, the more experience you get, the quicker you'll level, and with every level comes greater advantages.

Game on.

About the Author:
As you read this, Shelly Mazzanoble is probably on the phone with her mother.

Artifacts

BY BART CARROLL & STEVE WINTER
Illustration by William O'Connor

Last month, we discussed the history of magic items (or more properly "magical" items, as Steve Winter pointed out). This month, we look at those rarest, most powerful, and most coveted of all magic items: artifacts. Wondrous entities, their cataloging and powers once existed as a set of tables in the back of the Dungeon Master's Guide... and whose possession often caused many a DM to attempt to divest them from their players' character record sheets.

"The misty past holds many secrets. Great wizards and powerful clerics, not to mention the deities themselves, used spells and created items that are beyond the ken of modern knowledge. These items survive as artifacts, but their means of creation are long gone." (3E Dungeon Master's Guide)

"Upon learning the proper command, an artifact might allow a character to raise all his ability scores to their maximum or turn an enemy' bones to jelly. The artifact might allow the character to summon meteor swarms, utter a power word, resurrect, or stop time once per day at will. He might be able to summon powerful monsters and easily bend them to his will. He could discover the power to dominate the minds of others, enslaving them to his desires. And this might only be a small part of what the artifact would allow him to do. In short, there is no limit to what you, as the DM, decide an artifact can accomplish." (2E Dungeon Master's Guide)

"Those artifacts... which you bring into play should be so carefully guarded by location and warding devices and monsters that recovery of any one is an undertaking of such magnitude that only very powerful characters, in concert, and after lengthy attempts have any chance whatsoever of attaining one." (1E Dungeon Master's Guide)

Last month, we discussed the history of magic items (or more properly "magical" items, as Steve Winter pointed out). This month, we look at those rarest, most powerful, and most coveted of all magic items: artifacts. Wondrous entities, their cataloging and powers once existed as a set of tables in the back of the Dungeon Master's Guide... and whose possession often caused many a DM to attempt to divest them from their players' character record sheets.

The 4th Edition *DMG2* releases this month, which includes the return of two of the game's earliest artifacts: the Cup and Talisman of Al'Akbar and the Rod of Seven Parts. As so, this month we wanted to take a look back at the history of artifacts in general, as well as tell the tale of these key artifacts in particular.

From their earliest appearance, artifacts by their nature were designed to be utterly unique items: "Each artifact... is a singular thing of potent powers

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and possibly strange side effects as well. Regardless of how many of these items come into your campaign, only 1 of each may exist. As each is placed by you or found by player characters, you must draw a line through its listing on the table to indicate it can no longer be discovered randomly." (from the 1E *DMG*)

Artifacts originally came in two distinct but ill-defined classes: artifacts, which were created by insane, inscrutable, and usually long-dead wizards, and relics, which were created by insane, inscrutable, and long-dead clerics or gods. Collectively they were referred to as "artifacts and relics," but individual items were seldom identified as one or the other.

With a few artifacts debuting in *Eldritch Wizardry*, a more complete list appeared in the miscellaneous magic tables of the 1st Edition *DMG*. Players allowed truly random rolls on the treasure charts might actually hit the jackpot and gain an artifact, if they first accessed the right miscellaneous magic table (a 3% chance) and then the artifact listing on that table (a 1% chance – altogether meaning that three out of every thousand rolls would randomly kick out an artifact). While those odds might seem ridiculously low, they were the same as for almost every other miscellaneous magic item, be it an *efreeti bottle*, *portable hole*, *sphere of annihilation*, or mere, humble *folding boat*.

The artifacts table (Table III.E, *Special*) also listed the sale value of each artifact in gold pieces but with a footnote indicating that the items had no experience point value. Simply possessing an artifact was enough of a power boost that granting XP at the same time would be duplication of effort.

In later editions, artifacts lost something of this randomness. From 2nd Edition on, players could no longer simply stumble across them: "These devices never form part of a randomly placed treasure and so are not on any treasure table. The DM must always choose to include each particular artifact in his game" (2E *DMG*).

As singular items, artifacts were largely meant to be created in concert with the individual DM. "Because of the unique nature of each artifact and relic, their powers are only partially described." For the most part, the 1E *DMG* did not typically state the exact powers of artifacts; instead, each artifact's entry provided a number of effects to be chosen from wildly diverse tables of benevolent, malevolent, and prime powers. For example, the original *Hand of Vecna* granted its user:

- 10 minor benign powers;
- 5 major benign powers;
- 2 prime powers;
- 2 minor malevolent effects;
- 2 major malevolent effects; and
- 1 side effect!

Without republishing every one of these original tables, the side effects alone offer fairly telling insight into their chaotic miscellany:

Side Effects

- **A.** Alignment of possessor permanently changed to that of item
- **B.** Charisma of possessor reduced to 3 as long as item is owned
- **C.** *Fear* reaction possible in any creature within 20' of the item whenever a major or primary power is used; all, including possessor, must save versus magic or flee in panic
- **D.** *Fumble* reaction possible (as C. above)
- **E.** Greed and covetousness reaction in all intelligent creatures viewing the item; save versus magic or attack possessor and steal the item - associates are only 25% likely to have to check; henchmen check loyalty first, failure then requires saving throw as above
- **F.** Lycanthropy inflicted upon the possessor, type according to alignment of item, change to animal form involuntary and 50% likely (1 check only) whenever confronted and attacked by an enemy
- **G.** Treasure within 5' radius of mineral nature (metal or gems) of nonmagical type is reduced by 20%-80% as the item consumes it to sustain its power
- **H.** User becomes ethereal whenever any major or primary power of the item is activated, and there is 05% cumulative chance that he or she will thereafter become ethereal whenever a stress (combat, life-or-death, difficult problem involving user's decision) situation exists; the ethereal state lasts until stress is removed
- **I.** User becomes fantastically strong (18/00 - 19 if 18/00 already) but very clumsy; so Dexterity is reduced by as many points as strength was increased, and so no "to hit" bonuses are allowed for strength, and a -2 for clumsiness is

given instead; furthermore, the individual must be checked as if he or she has a *fumble* spell cast upon him or her whenever any item is handled or spell is to be cast by the user

- **J.** User cannot touch or be touched by any (even magical) metal; metal simply passes through his or her body as if it did not exist and has no effect
- **K.** User has a poison touch which requires that humans and man-sized humanoids (but not undead) save versus poison whenever touched
- **L.** User has limited omniscience and may request the DM to answer 1 question per game day (answer is given with limitations set by DM's discretion, with overall campaign factors and knowledge of player vs. player character overriding considerations)
- **M.** User has short-duration super charismatic effect upon creatures of the same basic alignment - evil, good, neutral (chaotic, lawful, true) - so that they will willingly join and serve the character for 1-4, 2-8, or 3-12 turns (depending upon how exact the alignment match is); thereafter the effect of the dweomer wears off and the creature will no longer serve due to realization of the enchantment and fear of it (and hostility is possible)
- **N.** Whenever any power of the item is used, temperature within a 6" radius is raised 20-50 degrees F. for 2-8 turns (moves with item)
- **O.** Whenever the major or prime power of the item is used, temperature within a 6" radius is lowered 20-80 degrees F. for 2-12 turns (moves with item)
- **P.** Whenever the prime power is used the possessor must save versus magic or lose 1 level of experience
- **Q.** Whenever the prime power is used, those creatures friendly to the user within 20', excluding the user, will sustain 5-20 hit points of damage
- **R.** Whenever this item is used as a weapon to strike an enemy, it does double normal damage to the opponent but the wielder takes (normal) damage just as if he or she had been struck by the item

ROD OF SEVEN PARTS

"The Wind Dukes of Aaqa are the legendary creators of this artifact. It is said that they constructed the Rod to use in a great battle of Pesh where Chaos and Law contended. There, the Rod was shattered and its parts scattered, but the enchantments of the item were such that nothing could actually destroy it, so that if its sections are recovered and put together in the correct order, the possessor will wield a weapon of surpassing power" (1E *DMG*).

As it's described in the 4th Edition *DMG2*, the *Rod* makes a likely candidate for not a singular but rather a linked series of expeditions—set across any number of levels—to recover its seven parts. The original *Rod* did at least offer some small help in the overall quest, as each part would impart to the owner a sense of direction as to where the next one could be found. Aside from the malevolent and side effects conveyed upon its owner, the 1E version also came with its own special curse of ownership, for "as soon as three joining sections are fitted together, the possessor is unable to let go of the *Rod* as long as he or she lives, until all parts are joined."

Of course, finding the seven parts only met one condition of the *Rod*. To be fully operational, the parts also had to be correctly recombined—no easy task, since any two parts incorrectly assembled would result in the greater part teleporting 100 to 1,000 miles away (presumably to an entirely new location). Even then, a complete *Rod* came with a built-in critical failure: "each time a prime power is used, there is a 1 in 20 (5%) chance that the whole will fly into its component pieces and teleport 100-1,200 miles away in random directions."

However difficult it was to find and connect the parts, sadly there was no consolation along the way for carrying around an incomplete *Rod*; originally "no single part has any power or effect alone." This was to change in later versions. The *Rod* featured in its own 2nd Edition boxed adventure written by Skip Williams. In it, the individual parts had their own powers and command words:

- ✦ cure light wounds 5/day (ruat)
- ✦ slow 1/day (coelum)
- ✦ haste 1/day (fiat)
- ✦ gust of wind 5/day (justitia)
- ✦ true seeing 1/day (ecce)
- ✦ hold monster 1/day (lex)
- ✦ heal 1/day (rex)

Connecting various numbers of parts unlocked increasing powers, mostly related to the *Rod's* original background association with the wind dukes (*fly, control winds, wind walk*); this also built the *Rod* itself into an increasingly greater melee weapon, from a *horseman's mace +1* up to a *quarterstaff +5*. A fully assembled *Rod* ultimately provided the ability to cast *resurrection*—but doing so *always* resulted in the *Rod* scattering and teleporting away, leaving behind just the smallest part.

While assembling this version of the *Rod* unlocked further powers, it unlocked further side effects as well—from making the owner fastidious, to being able never to lie, refusing to determine anything randomly, or always taking things literally—in essence, playing up the *Rod's* background as an instrument of lawfulness and providing further roleplaying material for its owner.

CUP AND TALISMAN OF AL'AKBAR

"Know ye, O stranger, that this story begins long ago, in the Seventh Dynasty of the Sultans of Arir. During the reign of Sultan Amhara, infidel invaders swarmed from the East, swallowing Annan defenders and driving refugees before them. Their violent wave threatened even the magnificent capital city of Khaibar, in which Arir's greatest treasures were hidden for safekeeping. By repute this treasure included more gems of all kinds than there were stars in the sky; and of course, the treasure beside which all others pale - the *Cup* and *Talisman of Al'Akbar*." (I9: *Day of Al'Akbar*)

Both the *Cup* and *Talisman* featured in the adventure module I9: *Day of Al'Akbar*. Further history of these artifacts described them as "great treasures which had to be protected at all costs. They were hidden in a place of safety, surrounded by guards and wards of organic, mystical, and mechanical nature. History records that the invaders were beaten off at the very gates of Khaibar, but the Sultan was tragically killed at the height of the fighting. He alone apparently knew the only safe method of retrieving the *Cup* and *Talisman* (and the rest of the treasure); for many spiritual and temporal leaders made bold proclamations about being appointed by Providence to lead Arir, followed inevitably by an expedition to retrieve the *Cup* and *Talisman*, from which none ever returned."

Holy treasure hidden somewhere in the desert seems the perfect MacGuffin for adventurers (and Indiana Jones). Once found, the *Cup* and *Talisman* could actually be used as the ultimate healing vessels for a good-aligned party. Originally, certain classes (cleric, druid, paladin, or ranger) could "fill the *Cup* with holy water and immerse the *Talisman* into the fluid to create a potion once a week," determined randomly:

1–5	healing potion
6–10	extra-healing potion
11–15	poison antidote balm
16–17	cure disease salve
18-–9	remove curse ointment
20	raise dead balm

In later versions, these artifacts were also given powers beyond the random tables of the 1E *DMG*. The *Cup* could *bless* on contact and *cure light wounds*, while the *Talisman* could *cure disease* on contact and *remove curse*. Together, both artifacts could also *resurrect* a slain comrade up to seven times/week.

Yet, as with the *Rod of Seven Parts*, the *Cup* and *Talisman* had their own curious drawbacks as well as powers—particularly if non-good characters possessed or dared use either one. Using the *Cup* resulted in such a character losing 5d6 pounds every time; using the *Talisman* aged a character 3–30 years until he or she became a "deathless withered zombie guardian" of the very *Talisman* itself.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The 4E *DMG2* states: "at a fundamental level, artifacts are magic items whose role in the game has far more to do with the story of your adventure or campaign than it does with the actual game effects of the items."

As such, while artifacts exhibit traits of magic items, they stand above and beyond such "common" items—if not in terms of absolute power, then in the role they play in your campaigns. Artifacts cannot be created by known means, they carry no price to be purchased, and they cannot be easily destroyed. Artifacts cannot be rendered down into so much *residuum*, but will only be sundered with supreme and specific effort ... that is, if they don't simply leave on their own accord when dissatisfied with their owner or when they feel the proper time has come. From the earliest editions, artifacts have always been items of singular identity; the concordance rules of 4th Edition look to integrate this sense of uniqueness with an artifact's powers and relationship with its owner.

Of course, artifacts also serve as compelling story devices, not only in how they interact with their owners, but how they are discovered in the first place. If you pick up the *DMG2*, you might consider the following options and story hooks around them:

- Retrace the Sultan's failed quest to find the missing Cup and Talisman, especially as they are needed to cure a plague (perhaps a zombie plague, with Halloween around the corner).
- The Cup and Talisman have been misused by a church or cult of dubious or outright evil intent; worried relatives have lost contact with its members, who have been transformed into zombies now guarding the artifacts.
- Create powers for the individual parts of the Rod of Seven Parts, or assign command words for each one which must be discovered as well (as if rituals).
- The Rod has long been associated with its antagonist, Miska the Wolf-Spider. We've provided the old stats; if you've been using the Monster Builder to create your own creatures, we'd love to see your results for updating Miska to 4th Edition. Send them (export your .xml file) to dndinsider@wizards.com.

About the Author

Steve Winter has wasted approximately three-fifths of his moderately long life, and the entirety of his professional career, in service to D&D® in one form or another. The rest of the time was invested blissfully staring at clouds, playing tag, reading comics, and painting miniatures.

Bart Carroll is most frequently found underground, although he infrequently will lair in desolate wildernesses. The globular body of the author is supported by levitation, and he floats slowly about as he wills. Atop the sphere are 10 eyestalks, while in his central area are a great eleventh eye and a large mouth filled with pointed teeth. His body is protected by a hard chitinous covering. The author's eyestalks and eyes are also protected, although less well. Because of his particular nature, Bart is able to withstand the loss of his eyestalks which will eventually grow back (1 week per lost member).

More LFR? You Got It!

BY CHRIS TULACH

illustrations by Eric L. Williams

Living Forgotten Realms play has really taken off in the year since the campaign launched. We've been rapidly expanding play offerings for it, and this fall, we have lots more going on with our biggest shared-world program. Check it out!

MINI-CAMPAIGNS!

Right now, the first 2 adventures for the "Embers of Dawn" mini-campaign are available for organizers to order. Set in Returned Abeir and with a companion "Adventurers of the Realms" article in *Dragon* #376, the mini-campaign is a great way to introduce Living Forgotten Realms play to a group of new players or to start up that new character you've been wanting to try. All the adventures play out as a tightly-connected story for 1st to 4th level characters, and one adventure is releasing each month through January 2010, when the finale will premiere at D&D Experience. The mini-campaign fun doesn't stop there. The weekend of October 3–4, we are conducting a public test of a potential new Wizards Play Network offering called LFR Excursions. Essentially, it's a mini-campaign in a kit, available to any Gateway-level WPN organizer and playable only at public locations like game stores and libraries. The public test will run at nine selected

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locations around the U.S., and we'll look at feedback from the test to determine the final form of the kits offered. If you'd like to play in the public test and give us feedback, head to the Wizards Community site's Living Forgotten Realms Group for a list of locations!

Weekend in the Realms 2: November 6–8

Join us once again this year as we explore a desolate region of Faerûn with this year's Weekend in the Realms! Bring your existing 1st-4th level Living Forgotten Realms character to play this exclusive, one-time adventure called "The Icy Queen's Crossing," written by Shawn Merwin. Set in the cold northern realm of Narfell, the 4-hour adventure takes place in the aftermath of the events depicted in the new Forgotten Realms novel The Fall of Highwatch, which releases on November 4. This is the first time we've done an adventure with a novel tie-in, and we sincerely hope to do more in the future! Here's the adventure's description:

The Icy Queen's Crossing

In a region so dangerous that even the most savage of Nar tribes fear trespassing there, a group of heroes has a chance to change the face of a war-torn land. This adventure has locations and characters from the Forgotten Realms novel The Fall of Highwatch. A Weekend in the Realms exclusive adventure set in Narfell for Living Forgotten Realms characters of levels 1–4.

All the materials a DM needs to run the adventure will be provided in the kit, including a double-sided poster map of all the encounters, a sheet of tokens to represent characters and monsters, and (of course) a 16-page adventure with a full-color cover featuring the art from the novel. If you're a player who doesn't have a Living Forgotten Realms character, you can either create one on-site (character creation rules are provided in the kit) or use one of six pre-generated characters presented on full-color, double-sided character cards.

Make plans to head out to your nearby play location to get in on the fun, as this adventure is exclusive to the weekend. A list of nearby play locations will be available through the Event Locator or on the Living Forgotten Realms Wizards Community Group later in October.

LFR's New Home: Wizards Community

While we will continue to have a Living Forgotten Realms page on the D&D website, we are transitioning most of the content to the new Wizards Community site, which launched mere weeks ago. The Wizards Community is the place to go to get the latest information on all of our play offerings, read blogs, contribute to the Wiki page, view the event calendar, discuss topics in the forums, participate in polls, and much more! While we're still in the process of adding a lot of content, you can already help contribute and share by heading over there. Create your own profile, add friends and groups, and explore all the site has to offer!

New Living Forgotten Realms Adventures Releasing This Month

Check out the latest adventure offerings for September!

September 2, 2009

CORM1-5 In the Bleak Midwinter

There is something rotten in the city of Suzail. While the Midwinter Festival brings throngs of competitors, merchants, and spectators, it also brings an element of danger. When the Crown turns to the PCs for help, it's up to them to uncover what lurks under the city's snow and ice. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Cormyr for characters levels 1–4.

ADCP1-1 Jungle Hunt **(Wizards Play Network Public Play Only)**

A great hunt has been called in the jungles of Chult. The Amnian trading costers of Port Nyranzaru are competing to see which one can bring in the biggest, rarest beasts as trophies, and they're looking for adventuring companies to do the hunting. Are you and your companions up to the challenge? A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Chult for characters levels 1-14. At least four of the characters in the party must be members of the same Adventuring Company in order to play this adventure, and all of the characters at the same table must be within a single level band (1–4, 4–7, 7–10, or 11–14).

September 9, 2009

MOON1-5 Lost Love

Moonshadow, an old eladrin adventurer, has been missing for years: Long enough to be forgotten by

man, but an eladrin's life is much longer than most. An old love seeks to find out what happened to him. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in The Moonshae Isles for characters levels 7–10. This adventure continues the "Fey Gates of the Sea of Swords" major quest that started in *BALD1-5 Lost Refuge*.

***SPEC1-3 Ghosts of the Past* (Wizards Play Network Public Play Until January 1, 2010)**
Every year, coronal Ilsevele Miritar, ruler of Myth Drannor, hires a group of adventurers to cleanup one of the many dangerous ruins within her forest kingdom. This year she is looking for several groups. What ghosts of the past have forced the eladrin to seek outside help and abandon their cautious ways? A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Myth Drannor for characters levels 1–14. There are four versions of this adventure, one for each level band. All of the characters at the same table must be within a single level band (1–4, 4–7, 7–10, or 11–14).

September 16, 2009
CORE1-11 Drawing a Blank
The city of Westgate is the focus of many rumors and plots. Recent stories tell of faceless skulkers who wander the city's streets at night and then vanish into thin air when confronted. Who or what could be causing this phenomenon? A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Westgate for characters levels 11–14.

September 23, 2009
MINI1-2 The Burning Scent of Perfumed Swords
Investigations bring you to the perfumed back alleys of Sambral where it becomes clear that you are not the first to look into the activities of the fire cult. All those who came before you have disappeared or been left a ruin of their former selves, leaving you to wonder, "Will you share their fate?" A two-round Living Forgotten Realms adventure that is Part 2 of the *Embers of Dawn* mini-campaign, set in Sambral for characters levels 1–4. It is recommended that you play the *Embers of Dawn* mini-campaign adventures in sequential order with one character for the best enjoyment and play possibilities within the mini-campaign, but it is not required.

September 30, 2009
DRAG1-5 White Petal Falling
Intrigue and conflict flow through Nathlekh's underbelly. A subversive organization has taken over the gambling trade in Nathlekh City's foreign quarter and is using its newfound influence to reshape politics in the region. Extortion, murder, and martial arts combine in this exotic city at the end of the Golden Way. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in the Dragon Coast for characters levels 7–10.

About the Author

Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, **Chris Tulach** actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has become the *D&D* Organized Play Content Developer, responsible for the development and deployment of *Dungeons & Dragons* organized play programs. He is also the co-author of *E2 Kingdom of the Ghouls*.

Ah, Athas! I Remember You Well

BY BILL SLAVICSEK

Time flies, especially when you're having fun. I've been having fun and making a living at it for more than twenty years. Sometimes it seems like only yesterday when I first walked into the halls of West End Games, or TSR, Inc., or Wizards of the Coast. It feels like only yesterday when Rich Baker and I were working on Dark Sun® – oh wait! It was just yesterday!

This month, I'll give you a recap of what happened at GenCon, including the numerous announcements I made concerning our 2010 plans for D&D®. Then I want to talk about the new Wizards Community that went live last week, the upcoming PAX show, and I have a special sneak peek of two upcoming titles – Underdark and Martial Power™ 2. Ready? Onward!

A Mighty Good GenCon

I had a great GenCon, and so did the company. I saw plenty of old friends, spoke to lots of players (including many D&D Insiders!), walked the hall to check out the newest offerings from other companies, did loads of interviews, ate lots of good food, and checked out play around the convention site.

I had two great thrills at the show.

First, I want to express my gratitude to the moderators and fans over at ENWorld for putting on a wonderful Ennies Awards ceremony. Not only was the ceremony fun and engaging, but I was pleasantly surprised when we were called up to the stage to accept a variety of awards, including gold medals for Best Product, Best Game, and Best Publisher of the Year. Thanks so much to everyone for your kind words, your votes, and your continued support. And congratulations to our fellow nominees and winners. It was a fabulous showing for everyone involved!

Second, I had the pleasure of hosting the D&D 4th Edition Extravaganza, where I got to reveal a number of secrets about our 2010 lineup of products. In case you missed it, the Big Reveals in my presentation included:

- Heroscape Dungeons & Dragons: Battle for the Underdark
- Dungeon Tiles Master Set
- D&D Boardgame: Castle Ravenloft
- Dark Sun Campaign Setting

We'll talk more about these and other products in the near future, but for now let's just imagine the possibilities . . .

Wizards Community

Last week, we turned on our new Wizards Community social network site. This is still a work-in-progress, and I encourage all of you to check it out while it's in Beta form so that you can provide feedback and help us make improvements. That said, I'm finding the profile pages and forums and wikis and stuff to be exciting and full of amazing potential and possibilities. I need to wrap my head around the idea of blogging and how that interacts with this column, but I'm sure I'll work something out. In the meantime, create a profile, make some friends, join a

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group, and let us know how we can make the experience even better and use it to its full potential.

PAX

If you're on the West Coast this weekend, the PAX expo will be in Seattle with all kinds of computer game and media goodness. We'll be on hand, showing off D&D and Magic, among other things. Chris Perkins will be around throughout the show, so find him and say hello. We'll be showing off the D&D Monster Builder, running RPGA events, and hosting a panel called "The Art of the Dungeon Master" with Chris, James Wyatt, and Steve Schubert. It's going to be fun!

DRAGON MAGAZINE AND DUNGEON MAGAZINE

Chris Youngs will talk about the next topic at greater length in the near future, but I wanted to give you an inside look at what we're thinking about for the digital magazines. Moving forward, you're going to see shorter articles more often than longer ones. They're easier to read online, and they allow us to tackle more content in a faster time frame. Which means that we'll be showcasing more articles every month, allowing us to cover more ground and provide more content for you to find something that connects with the characters or campaigns you're running or playing in. Lots of short articles leads to a 5-day-a-week release schedule. We're beginning to build toward this plan, and it should be fully engaged before the end of the year.

PRODUCT SNEAK PEEKS

Now let's look at content fresh from two upcoming D&D products. The first is "The Hatchlands," showcasing a place in *Underdark*. The second comes from *Martial Power 2* and details "Martial Practices." Enjoy, and keep playing!

In Case You Don't Know Him

Bill Slavicsek's gaming life was forever changed when he discovered **Dungeons & Dragons**® in 1976. He became a gaming professional in 1986 when he was hired by West End Games as an editor. He quickly added developer, designer, and creative manager to his resume, and his work helped shape the *Paranoia*, *Ghostbusters*, *Star Wars*, and *Torg* roleplaying games. He even found some time during that period to do freelance work for **D&D** 1st Edition. In 1993, Bill joined the staff of TSR, Inc. as a designer/editor. He worked on a bunch of 2nd Edition material, including products for core **D&D**, *Dark Sun*®, *Ravenloft*®, and *Planescape*®. In 1997, he was part of the TSR crowd that moved to Seattle to join Wizards of the Coast, and in that year he was promoted to R&D Director for **D&D**. In that position, Bill oversaw the creation of both the 3rd Edition and 4th Edition of the **D&D Roleplaying Game**. He was one of the driving forces behind the **D&D Insider** project, and he continues to oversee and lead the creative strategy and effort for **Dungeons & Dragons**.

Bill's enormous list of credits includes *Alternity*®, *d20 Modern*®, *d20 Star Wars*®, *Pokemon Jr.*, *Eberron*® *Campaign Setting*, the *D&D For Dummies* books, and his monthly *Ampersand* (&) column for *Dragon*® Magazine.

THE HATCHLANDS

For paragon tier and epic tier characters

The Hatchlands loop through the lowest reaches of the Underdark like an endless ulcerated intestine. According to drow legend, the network of pocked, unstable passageways came into congruence with the Far Realm long ago, ever so briefly. That tiny contact warped lifeless matter and flesh alike. Beholders were the abominable result.

Legend of the Great Hatching

Before the height of the empire of Nihilath came the Great Hatching. During this apocalyptic event, the lower depths of the Underdark shuddered and burbled. Vents appeared in its unstable rock, each of them a festering wound in the fabric of reality. The Great Mother, progenitor of the beholders, was born beneath the earth, called into life by the unfiltered, maddening illumination of the Far Realm. She tore herself from an egg that was her first worldly form. The pieces of the Great Mother's shattered shell dispersed throughout the Underdark.

Each shell piece attempted to recall its earlier shape. Most managed to become again what all had once been part of: an egg. However, each piece contained only a fraction of the vigor the original egg possessed. Still, when these lesser eggs hatched, beholders slipped forth from their slimy ruins.

The first beholders were paragons of insanity. They immediately fell into a murderous struggle for supremacy. Most died, though a few proved capable of a hint of self-preservation. These fled the hatching slaughter. They swept through the Underdark, claiming lofty chambers and secure redoubts for themselves.

Alternate Theories of the Hatching

As unyieldingly solitary beings, beholders can't be said to have a culture or a set of common myths. They do seem to be born with a flicker of collective memory about the Great Hatching. The story given here is the most commonly told, both by beholders themselves and by surface world scholars. However, beholders are notorious theorizers. If prompted, they might be tempted to spout alternate versions of the story. Examples reported by adventures surviving beholder captivity include:

- The apocalyptic event that resulted in the Great Hatching was Torog's maddened crawl through the Underdark.
- Beholder eggs condensed from the bodily effluvia of Torog, the crawling god.
- The Great Mother was summoned by the primordials to destroy Torog, their hated foe.
- The Great Mother does not literally exist. She is a personification by foolish early beholders of the Hatchlands' eggs, which itself was an anomalous but entirely natural phenomenon.
- The original beholder egg was accidentally created by illithids. When beholders formed from it, they destroyed the illithids. (To accept this story, one must believe the beholders' claim that they caused the downfall of the empire of Nihilath.)

The Hatchlands Today

Lonely, dank, and suffused with an acrid stink of elemental wrongness, the Hatchlands are now home to a few weak beholders. Occasionally, in an aftereffect of the Great Mother's birth, a fragment of her shell condenses into a new pulsing egg.

If threatened, the egg immediately hatches, birthing a completely grown, fully intelligent beholder. Left to its own devices, it develops for a longer period, until it hatches as a higher-level beholder.

The Impulse

No single beholder dares to claim the Hatchlands as its exclusive domain. At rare times, the beholders of the Underdark feel a sick, uneasy feeling deep in their globular bellies. After a period of nauseated confusion, they identify this effect as a call to fellowship from the Great Mother. If they permit themselves to speak of it at all, they ashamedly call this feeling "the impulse." It compels them to abandon their comfortable state of mutual hostility to come together toward a common purpose.

The Hatchlands serves as neutral ground for beholders. Within its confines, they can restrain their instinctive desire to violently establish dominance over all other creatures. Here, they can achieve this feat without the impulse, though they seldom see a reason to do so.

Upon arrival in the Hatchlands, the strongest beholder senses the wishes of the Great Mother. It uses its genius intellect to create a plan to carry out those desires. It then lays out these instructions to the others as they arrive. Vexed by each other's company, the beholders leave as quickly as possible, fanning out to perform their separate roles in the scheme.

MARTIAL PRACTICES

Beyond the exploits for which they're famed, martial adventurers can push the bounds of what is possible for ordinary mortals by mastering challenging techniques called martial practices. Using these rare methods, an adventurer can run for days, swim to great depths, and even create magic items. Although martial practices approach what's possible with rituals, they exist wholly in the realm of martial power.

A martial practice is similar to a ritual. To learn martial practices, you must first have the Practiced Study feat. To use a martial practice, you must then acquire a practice, master it, and perform it. A practice you master must be associated with a skill in which you are trained. The component costs sometimes include healing surges. After you finish performing a practice, you gain its benefit.

Practiced Study

Prerequisite: Any martial class
Benefit: You can master and perform martial practices. You learn one martial practice of your level or lower.

Acquiring Martial Practices

You can learn the rudiments of martial practices from a master or purchase them on the open market. Unless you find the practice as part of treasure, you'll pay something for it.

Learn through Training: Any character who has mastered a martial practice can teach it to you. The instructor can be another player character or an NPC you meet. Training is costly and arduous. Usually, you pay the cost in coins or other treasure. Learning a martial practice costs half the market price if you learn it from another player character. You should assume that you are paying for the supplies needed for training, not for your ally's work and time.

Purchase: If you can find a merchant that deals in rare goods, you can pay the market price of a martial practice to acquire it.

Find in Treasure: You might also find martial practices in the form of ancient manuals hidden away in dusty libraries or haunted castles. Practices contained within these texts offer detailed instructions so that with careful study you can master them. The Dungeon Master deducts the market price of a martial practice you find from treasure you earn.

Mastering Martial Practices

You must master a martial practice before you are able to perform it. To master a practice, you must:

✦ Acquire the martial practice

✦ Have the Practiced Study feat

✦ Meet or exceed the practice's level requirement

✦ Be trained in at least one of the key skills for the practice

✦ Study the martial practice for a total of 8 hours

The studying process differs depending on how you acquired the martial practice. If you acquired it through training, the study period takes place at the same time as acquiring the practice. If you bought or found the practice, the time is spent closely studying the manual and repeating the lessons and steps within the text.

Performing a Martial Practice

The steps to perform a martial practice correspond to the headers of the practice's description. The martial practices don't include action types in their descriptions, but you can infer what type of actions you might take to perform the activities that benefit from the practice.

Time: Martial practices take time to perform. You might have to adopt the right physical and mental state, sweat over a forge to craft an item, or painstakingly camouflage your party's campsite.

Component Costs: Martial practices are strenuous. Unlike rituals, which require only a material component cost, most martial practices require an expenditure of healing surges. This cost reflects the strain on your body and mind.

A few martial practices also require materials to properly perform them. When a practice has a component cost, you must pay the price from your store of treasure, whether you're spending coins, gems, or other valuables. The component cost represents the price of equipment, bribes, and raw materials. You pay the component cost, including both treasure and healing surges, when you complete the practice. If you cannot pay the full cost, the practice has no effect.

Skills: Each practice lists one or more key skills, and you must be trained in at least one of these skills to perform the practice. Some practices also require skill checks to determine your effort's effectiveness. Usually, the practice succeeds regardless of the check result and high results produce the best effects.

Unless a practice says otherwise, you make your skill check at the end of its performance. As with rituals, you cannot take 10 on this check.

Effects of a Martial Practice

After you finish performing a practice, you gain its benefit for the practice's duration. Sometimes it's instantaneous: You've learned the information or completed the task. Other times, you gain a benefit for a set amount of time, or you create a permanent object.

Assistance

Typically you must perform the martial practice without help. Any exceptions are noted in a practice's description.

Interrupting a Martial Practice

You can stop performing a martial practice at any point before it's completed without expending any healing surges or component costs. Once you stop, you cannot resume the practice; you must start over again.

Alter Ego

With a little makeup and a bit of misdirection, you can be anyone.

Level: 8
Time: 1 hour
Duration: 24 hours
Component Cost: 1 healing surge and 50 gp
Market Price: 275 gp
Key Skill: Bluff

You alter your own appearance or the appearance of an ally who is present throughout your performance of the practice. The disguise can alter facial and physical features and appear to modify height and weight by up to 10%. You can also use this martial practice to disguise gender, race, and age.

Make a Bluff check with a +5 bonus. Your result determines the Insight check a creature must make to determine that the person you disguised is not who he or she appears to be.

You can use this practice to impersonate another humanoid. When you interact with a creature that is familiar with the person you're imitating, that creature gains a +10 bonus to its Insight check.

Precise Forgery

Your falsified papers are resistant to even the closest scrutiny.

Level: 5
Time: 10 minutes
Duration: Permanent
Component Cost: 1 healing surge
Market Price: 80 gp
Key Skill: Thievery

You fabricate papers or documents so you can foist them off as being authentic. You can create forgeries of any kind, including written orders, treasure maps, paintings, manifests, and land grants. Forging a simple document requires 10 minutes. More complex works take as long as the Dungeon Master decides.

At the end of the practice, make a Thievery check. Your check result determines the forgery's quality. Anyone examining the document must succeed at a Perception check equal to your Thievery check to discern the falsehood. You might have to engage in a skill challenge to convince another creature that the document is authentic if the forgery contradicts other documents or orders.

Speech without Words

No language barrier can keep you from communicating.

Level: 3
Time: 5 minutes
Duration: 10 minutes
Component Cost: 1 healing surge
Market Price: 50 gp
Key Skill: Diplomacy (no check)

Through pantomime, you communicate with a nonhostile creature you can see, even if it does not speak your language. The creature must have an Intelligence score higher than 3. You can communicate simple ideas and concepts, such as figuring out where a monster went, where one might find fresh water, if there's a safe place to camp, and so on. Conveying complex ideas might require a skill challenge, at the Dungeon Master's discretion.